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# Feast of the Wingnuts

## How Economic Crackpots Devoured American Politics

Jonathan Chait

## *On the Hill* SPECTACULAR: *Republicans We Love**

Jonathan Cohn
Michael Crowley
Eve Fairbanks

*(*And lunatics we find endearing)*

+

Stanley Kauffmann *remembers* Bergman and Antonioni

George Pelecanos *on* Dogfighting

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*A Journal of Politics and the Arts*

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## Bang Galore

Be careful what you wish for. That is the lesson of the Bush administration's newly unveiled deal to provide India with nuclear fuel and technology. For years, opponents of the White House's foreign policy have called for more diplomacy—for further inspections in Iraq, for direct talks with North Korea, for any talks whatsoever on Iran's nuclear program. Now it appears that, in eschewing negotiation, the Bush administration was doing the United States a favor. Because, when the Bushies negotiate, they're extremely dangerous.

Let's start with the very purpose of the agreement. Although U.S. assistance will be intended only for India's civilian power program, it can't avoid helping India's nuclear weapons program. India has limited uranium supplies, which constrain its civilian and military nuclear programs. With its reactors now guaranteed a steady supply of fuel, India's indigenous uranium can be devoted to making weapons. Given that India is a friend, one might argue that this isn't a problem. But India's enemy is an unstable, nuclear-armed nation rife with Islamic extremism. If India expands its atomic cache, Pakistan will almost certainly follow suit, and any growth of Pakistan's nuclear industry exacerbates the threat of nuclear terrorism.

AP PHOTO/AJIT KUMAR

Indeed, Pakistan is a case study in the danger of the "friendly proliferation" Bush is now proposing. During the final decade of the cold war, the United States turned a blind eye to Pakistan's burgeoning nuclear program because Islamabad was a key anti-Soviet ally. That permissive attitude changed when the Soviets left Kabul, but by then it was too late. Soon Pakistan was producing nuclear weapons and selling nuclear technology to Iran, North Korea, and Libya. A.Q. Khan—the legendary impresario of its proliferation network—has been arrested, but his legacy remains: A recent survey of Washington's national security establishment found that Pakistan is thought to be the state most likely to transfer nuclear technology to terrorists in the next three to five years.

Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns has argued that India (unlike, say, Iran) deserves nuclear technology because it has not violated international proliferation laws. But this is true in only the most literal sense. In fact, India has spent the past 40 years in a sort of nuclear no-man's-land, one of only three nations that has refused to sign the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which forbids all but five nations (Britain, France, China, the United States, and the Soviet Union) from possessing nukes. India disclaimed any interest in the bomb but protested that it could not abide the treaty's "nuclear apartheid."

Instead, it continued with its program of "peaceful" nuclear research—using a Canadian reactor and U.S. heavy water—and, in 1974, exploded a not-so-peaceful nuclear device. Washington, angered by India's deception, quickly passed laws to ensure that U.S. atomic technology would never again be abused that way. It then established an international cartel, called the Nuclear Suppliers Group, to encourage other states to similarly restrict their exports.

These roadblocks hampered, but did not stop, India. In 1998, it conducted a series of nuclear tests, which led rival Pakistan to respond in kind, triggering an open arms race. The Clinton administration condemned the tests and refused to acknowledge either state as an official nuclear power. It hoped to eventually integrate India and Pakistan into the system of treaties, initiatives, and norms that restrict the spread of nuclear weapons.

In other words, if India has not broken the rules, it is only because it has ignored them altogether. And, although its record is far better than Pakistan's, its behavior has hardly been exemplary. Even putting aside India's illicit use of U.S. technology in the '70s, the Bush administration itself has sanctioned nine different Indian "entities" for proliferating WMD technology, mostly to Iran. In fact, the Indian government maintains that Iran has an "inalienable right" to enrich uranium.

But, in 2005, such quibbles fell victim to the administration's need for a positive foreign policy legacy. In his first term, President Bush had shunned foreign policy realism, with its notion of international relations as a game of chess in which nations manipulate alliances and rivalries. Bush was determined to make the world play by his rules. By his second term, however, he was losing at his own game, in Iraq and elsewhere, and Condoleezza Rice—a student of great-power politics—tried her hand at grand strategy. India, to which Bush had already made overtures, was a logical target: a rising great power and, even better, a democracy wary of China and fearful of Islamic terrorism.

So, in mid-2005, the president tried to buy India's friendship. Skipping over less radioactive carrots (like arms sales or G-8 membership), Bush offered India nuclear fuel and technology, in effect signaling acceptance of India's atomic arsenal. All that




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remained was to hammer out the terms of a "123 agreement," named for the section of U.S. code governing nuclear sales. But it took five rounds of negotiations before the agreement was finalized, as diplomats haggled over whether the Indians would allow us to restrict how they might use our technology. Yes, the administration that doesn't negotiate negotiated the terms of its own gift—and lost.

Now we have even less leverage with which to encourage India (and therefore Pakistan) to join the nonproliferation regime. Burns has claimed that the deal itself ties India to the regime, but the 123 agreement does no such thing. It does not, for example, require India to eschew nuclear testing. It does not forbid India from producing further fissile material for weapons (in fact, it will *facilitate* the production of plutonium). It does not require India to place all its nuclear facilities under international safeguards. It does not commit India to pursuing eventual nuclear disarmament. What it does is reward bad behavior.

Of course, the Bush administration has never cared much for rules. Robert Blackwill—one of the deal's architects and now a lobbyist for the Indian government—has dismissed nonproliferation as a concern of "nagging nannies." The implication is that he, Rice, and Burns have greater geopolitical vision, that they recognize the value of closer relations with a "natural ally" like India. But that argument is backward: It is *precisely because* India is a natural ally that bribes were unnecessary. Was India ever going to support Islamic terrorism? And now administration policy will have the effect of spurring nuclear development in a politically unstable country that has a horrible proliferation record and is thought to be harboring Osama bin Laden. Perhaps chess just isn't their game.

## Blowing Sunshine

The National Football League season begins this week. It seems strange to think that the major-party presidential nominations may be effectively decided by the Super Bowl on February 3. But that is an increasingly likely prospect, thanks to the latest antics of that rogue state, Florida.

It wasn't meant to be this way. Both parties envisioned a 2008 primary calendar that allowed the traditionally entitled states—Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina—to choose their nominees. But then, in May, Florida (perhaps emboldened by its outsized role in the 2000 election) decided it was entitled, too. In defiance of the national parties, the state legislature voted to schedule its primary on January 29.

The result has been a ridiculous game of leapfrog. Republicans in South Carolina moved their primary to January 19. Michigan looks set to move its primary to January 15. Iowa and New Hampshire may now hold their contests even earlier. Christmas in Des Moines is lovely, but it is no time to select a presidential nominee.

But perhaps this time Florida has done us a favor. By being as selfish as the other states that have dominated the primary calendar—and using its talent for unleashing national pandemonium—it has laid bare the absurdity of the current system: Only residents of select states—rather than all Americans—choose their party's presidential nominee.

Of course, it is difficult to blame state legislators for voting to give their constituents as large a say as possible. The obvious solution is to take the decision out of their hands. That is the aim of a bill authored by Senators Lamar Alexander, Amy Klobuchar, and Joe Lieberman, which would create a system of rotating regional primaries. Beginning in 2012, the East, South, Midwest, and West would vote in regional blocs. The first primaries would be held in March, with the order determined by lottery and changing every four years.

The idea has much to recommend it. It would give all states a chance to influence the nominating process and would end the scheduling arms race. The parties have proven unable to keep the states in line. Even the Democrats' recent decision to punish Florida by stripping the state of its convention delegates looks like it will have little effect beyond disenfranchising Florida Democrats, who are already pretty used to this.

The bill's major flaw is that it would allow New Hampshire and Iowa to maintain their place in the calendar. It's no surprise why the bill's architects proved wimpy: The two states fly off the handle at the very suggestion of reform. Tom Rath, a Republican National Committee member from New Hampshire, said efforts to interfere with the state's primary constituted "a civil rights violation." But prohibiting New Hampshire and Iowa from holding their contests before the first regional bloc votes—and empowering millions of American voters—isn't exactly Selma. ◆


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FROM EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JAMES GANDOLFINI

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# Patronage Saints

*The reactionary Congressional Black Caucus.*

JONATHAN CHAIT

NEARLY EVERYBODY was baffled when, half a dozen years ago, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) mounted the strongest resistance to campaign finance reform within the Democratic Party. One CBC member, Al Wynn of Maryland, even co-sponsored (along with then–Ohio Republican and current federal inmate Bob Ney) the counter-measure designed to kill reform. Numerous other Black Caucus members sided with Wynn. "You have the potential for opposites to come together," said Representative Bennie Thompson of Mississippi. "I'm talking about liberal African Americans and conservative white Republicans." Thompson has proven prophetic. Somehow, the Congressional Black Caucus has become the party's most reactionary wing.

In 2001, an ad hoc group of millionaire black businessmen began campaigning for repeal of the estate tax, claiming that the tax fell heavily upon black families. "Elimination of the Estate Tax will help close the wealth gap in this nation between African American families and White families," they argued in a newspaper advertisement. (In fact, this was the opposite of the truth: African Americans made up about 12 percent of the U.S. population but less than half of 1 percent of estate tax payers.) Several of the CBC's members latched onto this position anyway.

This year, some of the same black millionaires are campaigning to preserve the private equity tax break. The issue here is a loophole in the tax code that allows private equity managers to take most of their salaries in the form of capital gains, which is taxed at less than half the rate of regular income. The rationale here is essentially the same as the estate tax—you can find *some* African Americans who benefit, even though the vast majority of beneficiaries are obviously white and all are extremely rich. Amazingly, some CBC members seem to be persuaded.

Also this year, numerous CBC members have declared their support for "Medicare Advantage." In traditional Medicare, the government covers the cost of retirees' medical expenses. In Medicare Advantage, it pays insurers to do it. Because of the extra level of private bureaucracy and profits, it costs the government 12 percent more to insure a patient through Medicare Advantage than through traditional Medicare. Democrats want to reduce Medicare Advantage to the same cost as traditional Medicare and use the savings ($149 billion over the next decade) for expanded health care for uninsured children. Naturally, private insurers have unleashed a swarm of lobbyists to protect their subsidies.

The argument they came up with, and have sold with some success, is that the private program disproportionately caters to minorities. This boondoggle rationale was no more persuasive than the others. First of all, it isn't true: As a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities discovered, minorities are actually a bit *less* likely to use Medicare Advantage than the general population. Second of all, even if it *were* true, why would it make sense for the government to spend more money to enroll minorities in a program that works no better than regular Medicare?

These otherwise bewildering episodes come into clearer focus as part of a burgeoning alliance between the CBC and K Street, including business lobbies that are anathema to liberals. Indeed, businesses with the worst reputations among Democrats have had the most to gain from building ties with the Caucus. In recent years, Wal-Mart has "discovered a newfound interest in the Congressional Black Caucus," *The Hill* reported. As chair Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick described the CBC's ties to K Street, "Our outreach effort is vast."

So vast, in fact, that the CBC's outreach to K Street has metastasized into a general opposition to any reforms that limit the influence of money in politics. In addition to opposing campaign finance reform, last spring, many CBC members strongly resisted Democratic legislation to curtail the influence of lobbyists—with *Roll Call* reporting that the strongest Democratic opposition to the bill came from the CBC and the Blue Dog Coalition, whose members hail mostly from conservative districts. And many in the CBC likewise resisted Speaker Nancy Pelosi's efforts to remove Representative William Jefferson from office after FBI agents discovered $90,000 in alleged bribes inside his freezer.

Perhaps the most telling episode occurred earlier this year, when many CBC members tried to stop Pelosi from limiting committee chairmen to six-year terms. The self-interest angle was clear enough: CBC members tend to come from safe seats and can easily amass longevity. But their opposition to Pelosi again put them in opposition to the long tradition of liberal reform in Congress, which has sought to limit the power of committee chairmen, who are often in hock to narrow interest groups. The CBC is reverting to an older, grubbier tradition of maintaining power through patronage.

In fairness, none of these episodes involve the entire caucus, and many involve just a few members. But the CBC's increasing pro-business tendencies are important for two reasons. First, in a closely divided Congress, even a handful of defections can be crucial. And, second, defections from African American members are more useful than those from conservative Democrats to businesses seeking to moderate their image. As Artur Davis of Alabama—who has admirably resisted many of K Street's entreaties—puts it, "There's a strategic desire by the corporate community to put a different face forward on these issues." It's a deviously effective strategy—liberals are more hesitant to challenge black Democrats because complaints about CBC members cozying up to the business lobby have invariably been met with insinuations of racism.

Why would lawmakers from some of the poorest and most staunchly Democratic districts embrace the interests of organized wealth? The poverty of their districts makes them far more dependent on K Street than many other Democrats—unlike the Pelosis of the world, they can't rely on rich liberal donors in their home districts. And, as safe as their seats may be, primary challenges are not unheard of. Moreover, their fund-raising allows them to share largesse with fellow members and thus amass influence.

"They want to be seen as players," says one senior Democratic aide. "They don't want to be pigeonholed in niche issues like inner-city poverty." This is all well and good for aspiring congressional power brokers, but sort of unfortunate for poor people who live in inner cities. ◆

## TRB
### *From Washington*



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## The Enforcer

*Hillary Clinton's consigliere speaks.*

Patti Solis Doyle, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, is laboring to explain why she doesn't like the word "family" used to describe Hillaryland, the circle of longtime loyalists who dominate the candidate's political empire. Because it sounds too precious? Too insular? Too Mafiaesque? This last suggestion sends Solis Doyle into a full-bodied fit of laughter. Her head flies back, her dark hair sweeps her shoulders, her lean frame twists in the chair pulled up to the small, oval conference table in her blue-carpeted corner office of the campaign's suburban Virginia headquarters. "Yeah! It does!" she shrieks delightedly in a girlish voice that makes her seem closer to age 16 than 42. I make a joke about "The Sopranos," and Solis Doyle heads off on a tangent about that week's episode of the now defunct HBO hit.

"Did you see it?" she demands of campaign policy chief Neera Tanden, seated beside her.

"No," says Tanden.

"Can I tell you? He killed Christopher!"

"He did?"

"Yes! Oh my God, it was such a good episode!"

"He killed Christopher?"

Back and forth they go, like gossipy sorority sisters, until Solis Doyle crows, "And it's so great because everybody thought, going into the last season, that Christopher was going to be the one to sell him out!"

There's something priceless about talking mob hits and snitches (even fictional ones) with Solis Doyle, who has served as Hillary's right-hand woman for the past 16 years. If the infamously close-knit, tight-lipped Clinton campaign is the Washington political equivalent of La Cosa Nostra, Patti, as she's known throughout Hillaryland, is the family's consigliere, its chief enforcer, and its most devoted member. She is also one of its least known. Like her boss, Patti places a high priority on privacy, discretion, and loyalty. Press-averse to the point of hostility, she scorns the Fourth Estate as an irritating distraction and shares her boss's distaste for aides and advisers who chat up reporters in the service of their own reputations. "I hate doing media," she asserts. "I just want to get my work done."

This is making life somewhat complicated for Team Hillary these days. Eager to warm up the candidate's image, the campaign would love for the spotlight to fall a little more on its charming, attractive chief, who happens to be the first Latina ever to run a national campaign. Senior Hillary adviser Harold Ickes has been after Solis Doyle for months to play nice with reporters. And, if communications guru Howard Wolfson had his way, she would be on the cover of every magazine from *GQ* to *Cat Fancy*. But, even as the campaign pushes her toward center stage, Solis Doyle is pushing back. She will sit for the occasional interview. She'll enthuse about the fabulousness of her candidate and team. She'll even talk a bit about her family life. (Two young kids, not enough hours in the day …) But, as for insights into what she does, how the campaign functions, or how her boss leads, forget it. Her core ethos remains one of reticence and protectiveness, and she shares the penchant for secrecy that has made Hillary so frustrating for the press. A confessed control freak, she loathes process stories and has made clear there will be no chatter, period, about the inner workings of this campaign or her role in it. Hillary's closest aide may have resigned herself to

*Polishing the Petraeus Report.*



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having her life picked apart for the good of the cause. But that doesn't mean she has to like it.

Like Hillary, Solis Doyle hails from the Chicago area. The sixth and youngest child of Mexican immigrants, she was raised to be goal-oriented, organized, and hard-working. Her father came to the United States illegally in the 1940s, only to return home and apply for legal reentry in the early '50s. Her parents both worked—he in a furniture factory, she in a laundry—to send the kids to parochial school. Patti earned a scholarship to Northwestern University and, upon graduating, went to work in Chicago mayor Richard Daley's office. Her first political job was with Daley's subsequent mayoral campaign. Afterward, she followed campaign manager David Wilhelm to Little Rock, where he was heading up Bill Clinton's presidential team. When Wilhelm heard his new boss's wife needed an assistant, he volunteered Solis Doyle. "When I first landed in Arkansas and was told I had been assigned to work for his wife, I could not have been more disappointed," she laughs. "I was like, 'I have to work for the wife?'"

Over the next 16 years, Solis Doyle went from being Hillary's reluctant campaign aide, to being her White House scheduler, to top-managing her Senate campaign in New York, to directing her PACs, to overseeing her White House run. Along the way, the two women developed a mutually dependent relationship based as much on personal affection as shared political aims. ("I would do just *anything* for her," Solis Doyle stresses.) Since 1992, her only foray outside Hillaryland was a six-month stint in 2005 at the Glover Park Group, a political consulting firm. But early on, says firm cofounder Michael Feldman, Hillary made it clear that her longtime aide would *not* be staying. Soon after Solis Doyle arrived, recalls Feldman, GPG threw a party to celebrate the opening of its Manhattan offices. Clinton showed up, and, as she made the rounds, Feldman stopped her to say, "Listen, I really can't thank you enough for giving us Patti." At which point, he chuckles, "she grabbed my arm—and I remember it being a *very* firm grip—she looked at me, and she said, 'You mean *borrowing*.'" A few months later, Patti was back in the Hillary fold, directing fund-raising and laying the groundwork for the presidential run over which she now presides.

Just to clarify, Solis Doyle is not the strategic mastermind of Hillary's campaign. (That would be Mark Penn.) She is not its most seasoned adviser. (That would be Harold Ickes.) She is not its p.r. genius (Howard Wolfson), its image genius (Mandy Grunwald), its policy genius (Neera Tanden), its nuts-and-bolts organizing genius (deputy campaign manager Mike Henry), or its overall political genius (Bill Clinton, of course). In the most prosaic terms, Patti's role is to make sure the campaign's myriad geniuses are working together. "I manage the team," she states simply. Far more elementally, her job is to channel the voice—and the will—of Hillary. She is the person with a direct link to the candidate's brain, the one who can predict with uncanny accuracy how Hillary will respond to any given situation. "Patti knows how to read Hillary's moods. She knows how to assess them—when to push certain issues, when to hold back. Some of the rest of us," Ickes notes wryly, "don't necessarily understand such nuances."

Among Solis Doyle's trickier duties is refereeing the squabbles that staffers say erupt over everything from when to roll out a policy to how strong the language in a speech should be. ("Brothers and sisters fight and fight hard," she shrugs, bowing to the family analogy.) Within the core group on the seven-thirty strategy call each morning—Solis Doyle, Tanden, Ickes, Grunwald, Wolfson, Penn, and Henry—the talents are large, the egos larger, and the debates voluble. (While everyone on this campaign is brilliant, say insiders, not everyone is easy to love.) Penn and Grunwald in particular are known for their rough edges, their deep-seated belief in their own rightness, and their tendency to steamroll or simply ignore anyone they consider intellectually beneath them. "Let's put it this way," says a Democratic operative who has worked with them in the past. "Other people's feelings often are not a consideration." And when the two tie up, it's like *Clash of the Titans*. "Often there are moments where you can forget there's anyone else in the room," says the operative. Lesser mortals are advised to stand clear lest they become collateral damage. Into this mix toss Ickes—whose preferred mode of communication is profane invective—and even run-of-the-mill meetings can be dizzying. "Everyone is kind of talking at once," says Kim Molstre, the current campaign scheduler for both Hillary and Bill. "Mark and Mandy have this shtick that they do, going back and forth." It's not that anybody's really fighting, Molstre assures me. "It's just their way of expressing themselves." And it is Solis Doyle's job, say staff, to keep all this self-expression from getting out of hand. For instance? Don't ask. While Team Hillary will discuss campaign business in generalities, requests for detail prompt wandering gazes, backpedaling, professions of bad memory, or flat refusals. Quizzed about Solis Doyle's oft-cited leadership savvy, senior adviser Capricia Marshall, a Hillary loyalist and Patti pal since the 1992 race, laughs. "I can think of a lot of good examples," she admits. "But I don't want to repeat any of them."

Solis Doyle is clearly proud of her first-among-equals status in this crowd, a position cemented during Hillary's first



Anastasia Vasilakis

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Senate race, when, late in the game, she was dispatched to New York to impose order on the family. By then, many of the ideological and strategic tensions had been worked through, including early antipathy between veterans of Bill Clinton's 1992 political team (like Ickes and Grunwald) and those (like Penn) who replaced them after the 1994 Republican Revolution. Even so, a surfeit of power centers with competing priorities continued to cause problems. At one point early in Hillary's "listening tour," campaign aide Neel Lattimore, a former press secretary for the then–first lady, recalls phoning Solis Doyle in despair over his struggle to serve multiple "masters." "I was sitting on Connecticut Avenue crying. I hadn't slept in two days," recalls Lattimore. "And I told her, 'I can't get it done!' " Solis Doyle's response: "Are you finished? All right, Neel, pull yourself together and get back to work." By the time Patti quietly left Washington to join the war room in mid-August, the campaign was having trouble figuring out what events it was doing from one day to the next. It fell to the obsessively process-oriented Patti to make the dysfunctional operation function. Along the way, she had to educate some of the big dogs about who was in charge: "I remember somebody asked me once, because I said something on a call, 'OK, is that you speaking or is that Hillary speaking?' " she recalls, a gleam in her eye. "And I'm like, 'Does it make a difference?' "

No one familiar with the battles of 2000 would ask such a question today, say survivors. Those who have tangled with Solis Doyle can testify to her skills as Hillary's chosen enforcer, especially regarding the family *omertà*. ("Man, she will come at you!" Lattimore quips, recounting a verbal thrashing he suffered years ago when she thought he had leaked news of Hillary's fiftieth birthday party.) So, even as her colleagues wax rhapsodic about their beloved chief, they do so only in the vaguest terms lest they accidentally reveal too much. It is a tricky line for the campaign to toe: Look at our history-making campaign chief! (Just don't look too closely.) See what a great gal Hillary has put in charge! (Just don't ask what she does all day.) And, to some degree, it is a self-defeating strategy. Team Hillary is openly miffed about whisperings that Solis Doyle isn't up to the job or that she is simply the pretty figurehead of an operation being run by some more controversial entity like Mark Penn (whose pro-corporate centrism enrages the base) or Bill Clinton. But Solis Doyle's refusal to allow any glimpse of her in action ensures that the whispering will continue.

Of course, as far as Patti is concerned, this is a small price to pay for retaining a measure of control amid the chaos of a presidential campaign. Like any good consigliere, she understands the value of operating sub rosa. "I've always worked behind the scenes," she tells me. "I'm *very* effective behind the scenes." Somewhere, Tony Soprano is smiling.

*Michelle Cottle*

## Vote First or Die

*The ultimate New Hampshire supremacist.*

If someone ever publishes a how-to guide for journalists covering the New Hampshire presidential primary, it will likely include the following pieces of advice. First, skip the overrated Wayfarer Inn and stay at the Manchester Radisson. Second, always try to rent a vehicle with four-wheel drive. And, lastly, when visiting Bill Gardner to ask him a few questions about the primary, never park your car in one of the two-hour-metered spaces on Concord's Main Street. If you do, you're sure to get a ticket—because, when it comes to talking about New Hampshire's role in presidential elections, Gardner seldom finds himself at a loss for words.

Ever since 1976, when the then-28-year-old Gardner was elected to the first of his 16 terms as New Hampshire's secretary of state, he has made it his personal and professional mission to safeguard the New Hampshire primary's prized position as the nation's first. Every four years, it seems, some state tries to wrest away that honor. And, every four years, Gardner—who is vested with the sole authority to set the primary's date so long as it's held seven days before any other similar contest—manages to stave them off. Indeed, Gardner's stalwart defense of the primary's kick-off status has made him into something of a state treasure. "Bill can't die," says New Hampshire State Representative Jim Splaine. "When he needs it, we're going to make sure he has a heart transplant."

One morning not long ago, I visited Gardner in his office on the second floor of the State Capitol. He is a tall man with a balding pate and bulging blue eyes; much to the relief of his admirers, he appears, at the age of 58, to be in good health. Although Gardner is sometimes called one of the most powerful people in American politics, he eschews power's trappings. His office is one of the few in the Capitol that does not have air-conditioning, and he prefers shirtsleeved dress shirts and rumpled slacks to tailored suits. Combined with his exceedingly mild manner, this makes him resemble a high school history teacher. But he is passionate about the primary. As the minutes ticked away on my parking meter, Gardner explained why New Hampshire deserves to have the first presidential primary—and how he intends to keep it that way.

"All the states have something unique," Gardner said in his flat Yankee accent. "There's a reason why the Kentucky Derby's in Kentucky. . . . And, for New Hampshire, there's a reason that the primary is here today. It goes way back."

Indeed, there's nothing Gardner likes more than explaining just how far back it goes. He started his lecture on New Hampshire's "unique political culture," as he called it, with the year 1774—when Paul Revere came from Boston to Portsmouth to warn people to protect their arms—and continued up to the present day, in which New Hampshire has more people per capita who have either held or run for public office than any other state. "California would have to have over twelve thousand members of its House of Representatives to have the kind of representation we have," he boasted.

Not surprisingly, Gardner chose to answer the most commonly voiced criticism of New Hampshire's outsized influence in presidential elections—namely, that the state, which is 96 percent white, is crucially lacking in racial diversity—with a quick tour through the history books. He proudly noted that the first speech on the U.S. Senate floor advocating the abolition of slavery was given by a New Hampshire senator and that Jonathan Daniels, the SNCC volunteer who was shot and

*Steve Savage*



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killed in Alabama in 1965 while protecting a 17-year-old black girl, hailed from Keene. Even the minor league Nashua Dodgers—which in 1946 became the first racially integrated baseball team in the United States—was grist for Gardner's argument. "To say we're not sensitive to the concerns of minorities—our history proves otherwise," Gardner said, sounding genuinely hurt. Of course, historical arguments only go so far, and, over the years, Gardner has also been willing to mix it up (in a vote-first-or-die sort of way) with various political bigwigs. In 1983, when the Democratic National Committee objected to Gardner's decision to schedule his state's 1984 primary in February—preferring instead that it be held in March—Nancy Pelosi traveled to New Hampshire to try to persuade Gardner to change the date. As recounted in *Why New Hampshire?*, a nearly 300-page history of the primary that Gardner co-authored, Pelosi told him: "You have a future ahead of you—you are a young man and you are doing a very foolish thing by this." But Gardner didn't back down—and the primary was held in February. Sixteen years later, Bill Bradley and Al Gore's campaigns, and even New Hampshire's own governor and its two party chairs, all pleaded with Gardner to push back New Hampshire's primary by one week to accommodate the Iowa caucus's preferred date. But Gardner again held firm. As *Why New Hampshire?* recalls the denouement: "When Iowans eventually did get the message that the Granite Staters were a stubborn lot led by a steadfast secretary of state, they caved."

This year, Gardner is once again keeping a vigilant eye on both the calendar and other states. In May, Florida decided to schedule its primaries on January 29. And, earlier this month, South Carolina Republicans moved their primary to January 19. The day before my visit, the Michigan Senate had voted to hold its primaries on January 15. But, despite all this jockeying, Gardner was serenely confident that New Hampshire would remain first. Because the state's small size means the logistics of holding its primary are fairly simple, Gardner could likely to wait until December to announce a January 8 date. "I've never had to change the date once I've set it," Gardner said. "I've waited and waited and I've never had to change it."

Gardner famously maintains an open-door policy in his office. And, that morning, a small group of Ukrainian students studying for the summer at nearby Franklin Pierce College took advantage of that policy and dropped in. Although there were more prominent visitors to the state on that day—both Hillary Clinton and John Edwards were stumping nearby—Gardner had no desire to see them. For all his love of his state's primary, he doesn't attend any political events, only seeing the candidates when they come to his office to pay the $1,000 fee required to appear on the primary ballot.

As Gardner stood in the foyer of his office, he regaled the Ukrainians with stories of the visitors who had preceded them. "If you sat in the corner, you'd see an average person, you might see a vice president," he said. "It's kind of unique that way: If you want to be the president of our country, you start in a small place like this." For more than half an hour, Gardner went on in this vein—pointing to the pictures on the wall of Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, Paul Tsongas. He even talked about Franklin Pierce. Although the students began shuffling their feet and their chaperone repeatedly checked his watch, Gardner did not seem to notice. It wasn't until an aide appeared at his office door and informed the students that they were late for their next appointment that Gardner emerged from his reverie. "Senator D'Allesandro says you have to stop talking," the aide informed Gardner. And, with that, he finally did.

*Jason Zengerle*

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ANTHONY RUSSO; AP PHOTO/VICTOR R. CAIVANO

## Barking Mad

*Dogfighting's poisonous politics.*

I have a dog named Buster, one of two mixed breeds I have adopted through the Washington Humane Society on Georgia Avenue. Buster is half pit bull, 80 pounds of muscle and jaw, and his booming bark and very appearance at my home's front door make delivery men nervous and an alarm system unnecessary. He looks formidable, and he is, but he is also the gentlest dog I have ever had. You cannot make him mad.

If Buster had been full pit, it is likely that I would not have been able to adopt him. The Washington Humane Society euthanizes a large percentage of the adult pit bulls they rescue, as they have determined them to be unadoptable; they are simply too risky to place into homes, especially those containing children. These dogs have been permanently damaged by many of their owners: trained, against their very nature, to attack, fight, and maim.

I have been writing about the pathology of dogfighting for many years in books like *Hell to Pay*, in screenplays for HBO's "The Wire," and, in great detail, in my novel *Drama City*, which describes the life of a parolee turned Humane Society law enforcement officer and his quest for cleansing and a second chance via the job. At the time, readers and viewers shrugged, but the Michael Vick scandal has vaulted the issue into the front of the public's consciousness.

When I was researching *Drama City*, I rode with two committed, tough Humane Society officers, Adam Parascandola and Mitch Battle. The condition of abused fighting dogs and makeshift arenas in the city was eye-opening, but, in terms of numbers, the popularity of the fad—to call it a sport is laughable—has receded. Parascandola worked the toughest districts of the city during the



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peak years of the pit bull craze, which, not coincidentally, was also the era of the worst drug-related violence ever perpetrated on this city. Big-purse bouts, held in neighborhoods like Simple City, were funded by drug money, their participants often flown in from out of town. A pit bull was an accessory, like a four-finger ring or a new set of rims, something to be discarded when its value had been diminished. Dogs labeled curs—those who had lost fights and shamed their owners—were shot in the head, thrown off the rooftops of buildings, and dumped in alleys and dumpsters. Let me put a finer point on it: Cowards, insecure about their own manhood, murdered defenseless animals to save face among their equally misguided peers.

I DON'T HAVE ANY AX to grind with Michael Vick. He's going to pay a big price for what he did, and I'm all about forgiveness and the possibility of redemption. His story is significant for two reasons: There won't be any more dogs fought, tortured, or murdered under his watch, and his prosecution has brought the issue of dogfighting to light.

Predictably, the event has stirred some rather spirited debate. Radio talk shows and the Internet have been heavy with chatter about the implications of the Vick scandal, most prominently veering towards the issue of race. Is the Vick story getting more play because he's black? Is this a takedown of a rich, black athlete who once flipped off his fans at a home football game? The questions are valid, and I'm always up for those discussions. The D.C. area is one of the most interesting regions in the country to live in precisely because we have these kinds of arguments, openly and heatedly, every day.

Would people be so angry, collectively, if the perpetrator had been, say, Brett Favre or Peyton Manning? I honestly don't believe they would be. No doubt there are white people in this country who are pleased, in some distorted way, that a post-Iverson, hip-hop, millionaire black ballplayer with attitude got his comeuppance. And isn't it time to retire that code phrase "it's the culture" when speaking of African Americans and crime? After all, there are plenty of ignorant white Americans who are involved in the fighting and killing of dogs. That aside, it becomes disturbing when folks react to the racial aspects of the issue's blowback by defending the act and attempting to lessen the severity of the offense. Put another way, what should be debated and discussed is the *reaction* to the Vick affair, not his crime.

ANTHONY RUSSO

So, please, if you're going to get into it, state your intentions in an honest manner. In a *Washington Post* column on August 22, Courtland Milloy equated the slaughtering of animals for food with the murder of dogs for fun, saying that it was hypocritical for meat-eaters to condemn Vick for his actions (he also informed us, pointlessly, that the murder of humans is a far worse crime than the murder of animals). Curiously, Milloy never mentioned race in his argument, though Washingtonians who have read his column for years knew that race *was* the subject of the column, as it is the subject of nearly every column he writes. The fact that he did not man up and clearly say what was on his mind, and the fact that his editors did not require him to do so, was deplorable.

From time to time, I've been accused of seeing everything through the prism of race in my novels. Nevertheless, I'll continue to write about it, and I hope to read many more thoughtful pieces on the subject from people like Courtland Milloy. To be sure, there are valid discussions of race to be had on the disproportionate degree of media attention given to the Vick case. But let's be clear: Dogfighting itself should not be debated with regard to race, nor should it be reduced to ridiculous and illogical argument. Training dogs to fight is wrong. Murdering dogs is wrong. The issue is not complex. There is no other side.

GEORGE PELECANOS

*George Pelecanos is an independent film producer, a screenwriter, and the author of 14 novels set in and around Washington, D.C.*

## Dianetics, the Tax Plan

*Fred Thompson channels L. Ron Hubbard.*

THE BASIC theological tenets of the Church of Scientology are well known: a fanatical hatred for psychiatry coupled with a creation myth that involves an evil alien ruler named Xenu and his sundry galactic allies. The basic tenets of its tax policy are somewhat less familiar. But Scientologists promulgated and, at one point, heavily promoted a proposal that would replace all federal income taxes with a national retail sales tax (NRST). And the theology and tax policy aren't entirely unrelated: Xenu used phony tax inspections as a guise for destroying his enemies.

In a strange confluence, the Scientologist proposal happens to be nearly identical to one of the trendiest conservative tax proposals of the year, the so-called FairTax, which has been endorsed by John McCain and Fred Thompson, as well as second-tier presidential candidates Mike Huckabee, Tom Tancredo, Duncan Hunter, and Democrat Mike Gravel. Georgians John Lindner and Saxby Chambliss have introduced FairTax legislation in the House and Senate that would establish a 23 percent national sales tax.

But, when you mention any hint of the nexus between Scientology and the NRST—as I did briefly in a recent *Wall Street Journal* op-ed—you'll be denounced by FairTax supporters as a smear artist. This retort, however, is simply evidence that these FairTax supporters don't know the history of their own proposal. That's too bad. Perhaps if they understood its origins in Scientology, they might have a greater appreciation for its inherent flaws.

THE STORY OF the FairTax's provenance is one that I can tell with some firsthand knowledge. In 1993, fresh from a stint at the Treasury Department, I spent a few months at the Cato Institute. I was filling in for Steve Moore—now an editorial writer at *The Wall Street Journal*—who took a brief leave from his job as director of the think tank's fiscal studies program to advise former Texas Representative Dick Armey. It was there that I was visited by a man named Steven L. Hayes, the founder of group called Citizens for an Alternative Tax System (CATS) that promoted the NRST, and who was, as Moore pointed out to me, a prominent Scientologist.

It wasn't hard to figure out the Scientologists' motives for hawking the NRST. The IRS had refused to recognize Scientology as a legitimate church—a fact that seemed to enshrine their popular reputation as a "cult." To remedy this situation, Scientologists waged war against the IRS. At various points, the Church attempted to infiltrate the tax authority and even hired private investigators to examine the private lives of IRS officials. And the same impulse behind these measures lead them to devise the NRST. One church spokesman told *National Journal*'s Paul Starobin, "We thought, 'If this [discrimination] is happening to us, there



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must be a lot of people to whom this is happening.' … How could some positive changes be made?" Since nearly every state has a sales tax, it would be a simple matter to get them to collect a federal NRST, rendering the IRS instantly superfluous, a ripe target for abolition.

As Starobin told the story, CATS wooed the Texas political elite, including Robert A. Mosbacher Jr., the son of George H.W. Bush's secretary of Commerce. Mosbacher urged Hayes to reach out to Jack T. Trotter, an attorney close to Texas Representative Bill Archer, the ranking Republican on the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee. Although Trotter and Hayes held several meetings, nothing came of it. According to Starobin, Trotter feared that the Scientology connection would turn off too many potential supporters. (Hayes, for his part, has always denied that the church played any role in his group after helping found it.) But Trotter was hooked by the sales tax idea and wanted it expanded to include the payroll tax as well. He formed Americans for Fair Taxation (AFT) in 1995 to promote the CATS proposal, but without the taint of Scientologist involvement. AFT promoted the FairTax for a decade, elevating the plan to its current popularity.

By the time that Trotter had shunted the Scientologists aside, the church was losing interest in tax reform. In 1993, the IRS finally recognized Scientology as a legitimate religion, ending the rationale for a vendetta against the tax collectors. CATS basically withered. Its last tax return, filed in 2005, showed contributions totaling $1,725. A year later, the group appeared to be completely defunct. (Interestingly, in 2003, the group's tax returns listed my old colleague Steve Moore as a director.)

A brief digression: A few years after I encountered Hayes, he gained notoriety by suing an anti-Scientologist organization called the Cult Awareness Network (CAN). When CAN declared bankruptcy in the wake of this suit, Hayes purchased the organization's assets and name at auction. Overnight, CAN ceased to be a thorn in Scientology's side.

THE REASON I brought up the Scientology connection in the first place was not to create guilt by association. Rather, it was to explain that CATS had one very specific goal: the abolition of the Internal Revenue Service. Anything else that the NRST might accomplish was entirely secondary. And, in the rush to rid the world of the IRS, the plan's authors neglected some important details, not to mention some key facts.

For starters, the FairTax is deceptively calculated. When you think of a 23 percent sales tax, you think of paying an extra 23 cents on the dollar. That's how every sales tax in the world works. The FairTax, on the other hand, doesn't represent 23 percent of the pre-tax value of the item you bought, but the post-tax value of the item. So, under FairTax, you wouldn't pay $1.23 for a $1 widget—but $1.30, since the 30-cent tax is 23 percent of $1.30. How straightforward!

The legerdemain doesn't end there. Unlike every other sales tax in the world, the FairTax actually applies to everything—every pencil, every tank—the government buys. Unfortunately, the FairTax proposal doesn't take into account this increase in government spending. Thus, it will either provoke a massive cut in federal spending or a massive increase in taxes.

And what about the poor who bare the brunt of this highly regressive tax? The FairTax would track every household's monthly income and then cut checks to minimize the pain, a logistical challenge that will ultimately resemble some welfare state nightmare. What's more, this would cost gobs of money, forcing further cuts in spending.

For these and other reasons, every reputable tax expert who has ever looked at the FairTax has concluded that the true tax rate would have to be much, much higher than 23 percent (or even 30 percent) to work—and, even at that unrealistically low rate, the plan would inspire massive tax evasion. In short, the FairTax is a crackpot scheme from beginning to end. That would be true even if the Scientologists hadn't authored it.

BRUCE BARTLETT

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*Bruce Bartlett was the deputy assistant secretary for economic policy at the Treasury Department from 1988 until 1993.*

## Subprime Offender

*The real villains of the mortgage crisis.*

BY THIS POINT, everyone knows the rough outlines of the subprime mortgage mess. For much of the past year, we have been told of homebuyers pushed out of houses whose risky mortgages they never should have qualified for in the first place. During that time, bad loans have forced more than 140 mortgage companies out of business. The fallout has spurred shakiness in global markets that has yet to abate.

In assigning blame for this fiasco, most people have focused on the mortgage lenders who took advantage of homeowners and the investors who enabled these lenders by buying up bits and pieces of all the mortgages. But one major source of responsibility for the subprime disaster has, until recently, been largely overlooked: the ratings agencies. These government-chartered corporations—officially known as Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organizations (NRSROs)—are supposed to provide the public with timely and consistent insights into the credit risks and financial condition of investments and financial institutions. They failed to do so. The reason appears to be a massive conflict of interest between the supposedly objective major ratings agencies—Moody's, S&P, Fitch—and the companies they were assessing.

JACK BLACK



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To understand how this happened, you first have to understand the crucial role that ratings agencies play in the loan industry. Basically, lenders make the loans, then sell them off in blocks to investment banks, which slice them up in various ways, recombine them, and resell them to investors. Over the last few years, new corporations were created specifically to buy up and sell interests in those mortgage-backed securities and collateralized debt obligations—that is, the sliced, diced, and recombined mortgages bought and sold on Wall Street. Insurance companies, banks, pension funds, and hedge funds would then invest in the securities of these companies. The reason they were so eager to invest was that these securities (known as "structured" securities) were rated "investment grade"—meaning that they were viewed as carrying very low risk—while providing far higher returns than similarly rated corporate, municipal, or treasury bonds.

It was the ratings agencies that had bestowed these labels on the securities. And the labels mattered: Various global financial regulators, treating the ratings agencies as if they were objective onlookers, mandated that banks, insurance companies, and pension managers could only buy securities that were highly rated by NRSROs. In effect, regulators were entrusting much of their own oversight responsibility to the ratings agencies.

The problem was that the ratings agencies faced a huge conflict of interest. Not only were they vouching for the securities' credit soundness, they were being paid large fees by the issuers of the securities to do so. They were also deeply involved in setting up the structures these companies had to conform to in the first place. In fact, almost half of NRSRO revenues come from rating companies that functionally do not exist until the ratings agencies bless them.

This wasn't always the way the industry worked. Between 1909, when John Moody began rating the creditworthiness of railroads, and 1970, when the Penn Central Transportation Company defaulted on a commercial paper obligation, the revenues of ratings agencies came almost exclusively from subscription fees of investors who received the firms' research. After the Penn meltdown, however, debt issuers began to pay ratings agencies to evaluate them as a way to stimulate investor confidence in the quality of their credit. Thus began the conflict of interest.

These conflicts worsened dramatically during the real estate boom from 2002 to 2007 and the accompanying growth of structured securities. The ratings agencies' profit margins on these deals were enormous. Suddenly, the more deals they could justify rating highly, the better their earnings—and the less incentive they had to rate conservatively. Consider, for example, that the ratings agencies didn't even bother to require issuers to disclose critical pieces of information about the underlying mortgages of the securities they were rating. Between 2002 and 2007—the entire subprime boom and beginning of the bust—Moody's didn't use, as a primary driver of its analysis, one of the three most generally accepted predictors of default: information about the ratio of borrowers' debt to their income. Moody's also didn't use key information about when an adjustable rate mortgage would adjust to a higher rate—a common cause of defaults. Nor did it require information about the highest level an interest rate could adjust to. There's no way a ratings agency could have made sound judgments about these securities without this information. Yet the agencies continued to determine that the majority of these securities deserved investment-grade ratings.

Perhaps of greater importance, the ratings agencies did a poor job of keeping their ratings up to date. The agencies regularly receive hundreds of thousands of dollars for their initial rating of a security, but then charge the issuer only a few thousand dollars a year to monitor those ratings. As a result, the ratings agencies have little incentive to keep their ratings current after the securities are sold. Even where the ratings agencies recognize failures in their models that cause them to change their rating processes, they rarely re-rate existing securities until after the impairments are already obvious to investors.

In a nutshell, this fueled the subprime boom and bust. Because lenders knew there would always be investors eager to buy up their mortgages, they never had to worry about holding onto them themselves. When you know you're going to be passing off a loan to someone else, and you know they're going to accept it if it is highly rated, you relax your standards, avert your eyes, get the borrower to sign on the dotted line, and ship the mortgage off to Wall Street, where the ratings agencies will slap a veneer of respectability onto it.

If all this sounds familiar, it should. The role of the ratings agencies in the world of structured finance is analogous to the role played by many Wall Street research analysts during the dot-com boom—when they simultaneously vouched for and profited from various companies. But, while the situations are similar, this one is probably worse. In the stock world, SEC filing and disclosure requirements allow investors to do their own analysis. By contrast, there is little public information available and few disclosure requirements on the structured securities the ratings agencies evaluate. What's more, while no one was required to listen to Wall Street analysts during the dot-com boom, regulators require many investors to use the agencies' ratings as the basis for their investments in structured securities.

Historically, there hasn't been much recourse against the ratings agencies. The SEC has generally exempted them from liabilities unless they could be proven to have been downright reckless. And the prevailing legal precedent has always treated them as journalists.

That's right—journalists. This, of course, is ridiculous. Journalists are expected to test the accuracy of information from all sources in pursuit of the truth. Yet, despite the fact that international securities regulators require the ratings agencies to use all available information that may be relevant to their analysis, the agencies rely almost exclusively on information provided by their customers. Indeed, the ratings agencies themselves generally claim they're not in the business of independent verification. For instance, one agency recently insisted it had "no obligation to verify or audit any information provided to it from any source" or to "obtain any information that the issuer has not otherwise provided."

This may be starting to change. In 2002, Fitch and Moody's were issued subpoenas to hand over e-mails and other documents regarding their relationship with a defendant investment bank. Fitch refused, claiming protection under New York's press shield law. But a U.S. appellate court found that Fitch had played a fairly active role in commenting on proposed transactions, even offering suggestions about how to model the transactions to reach the desired ratings. Therefore, it ruled that "Fitch was not entitled to assert the journalist's privilege." This development—combined with a 1995 U.S. appellate court ruling which held that any party that takes steps "necessary" to the sale or distribution of securities can be deemed an underwriter—suggests that lawsuits growing out of the current crisis might force the ratings agencies to start living up to the public responsibilities that have enriched them. And that would be long overdue. *Joshua Rosner*

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*Joshua Rosner is managing director of Graham Fisher, an independent research consultancy.*



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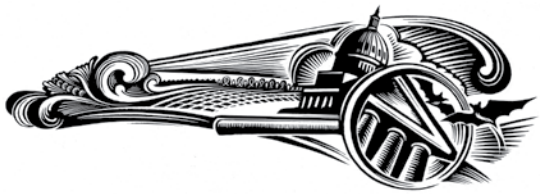

# On the Hill

*REPUBLICANS WE LOVE*
*(And lunatics we find endearing)*

## EARNEST GOES TO WASHINGTON

*The strange heroism of Chuck Grassley.*

As the Senate took aim this summer at private equity firms, dragging hedge fund managers and other Masters of the Universe to the Hill to explain why, exactly, they needed tax breaks, one senator stood out for his degree of outrage. Having co-sponsored a bill to force the Wall Street wizards to pay their fair share of corporate taxes, Senator Chuck Grassley threatened to go to the mat to pass it, declaring: "I'm going to do it regardless of how unpopular it makes me." From his brash rhetoric, you'd be forgiven for assuming Grassley was some kind of share-the-wealth liberal, somebody like, say, Charlie Rangel—who, in fact, is taking on private equity in the House. But Grassley is a conservative Republican—and ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee, a territory where the steady flow of Wall Street donations tends to inhibit this kind of economic-justice crusading.

Look through his record, though, and Grassley's heresy on private equity isn't a surprise. Over the past six years, Grassley has been behind many of the exposés that have undermined GOP sacred cows—a role that sets him at odds with the relentlessly on-message Bush-era Republicans. He requested the inspector general's juicy investigation into the expenses of Smithsonian head Lawrence Small last February (see "Smallville," February 28). (When the report didn't dig deep enough for Grassley's taste, one of his aides was deployed to help a *Washington Post* photographer sneak inside Small's office and snap humiliating pictures of his $2,043 armchairs.) He took the FDA to task for getting too cozy with Big Pharma, teamed up with Senator Patrick Leahy to champion FBI whistle-blower Coleen Rowley, and reduced Bush's wished-for tax cut by half. He's also beaten up administration hacks, including—with a notable lack of party loyalty—Health and Human Services Inspector General Janet Rehnquist, the late jurist's daughter. "[Rehnquist] was ousted because of [Grassley's] investigations," says Danielle Brian, executive director of the Project on Government Oversight.

In some sense, Grassley embodies the most ancient of conservative principles, a suspicion of institutional power. But it's incredible that Grassley has retained this disposition during the Bush years, when amassing institutional power became conservatives' reigning m.o. "A large majority of people are annoyed by [my oversight], including my colleagues," he told me—but, even so, he resisted the pressure to conform during a time when dissidents disappeared. What does Grassley have that his fellow Republican colleagues don't?

Two weeks ago, I traveled out to Iowa to meet this Republican hero, arranging to join him on the last leg of a Des Moines–bound bus tour he was leading for foreign ambassadors and diplomats to boost the state's visibility in trade. Re-reading his resumé (and his pugnacious one-liners) on the plane to Cedar Rapids, I conjured up a sort of heartland Gregory Peck, a politician who channeled the old-fashioned, self-assured brashness of the iconic American fighter for justice.

When I finally connect with Grassley at his bus in a rural parking lot at seven in the morning, he isn't contemplating frauds and abuses to vanquish, though. Nor is he boning up on the businesses we'll see later; nor is he even ruminating for the ambassadors on the singular charms of the endless farmland around us. No, Grassley's chief topic of interest as we set off—and one that continues to come up hour after hour that day—is Dairy Queen. "Tell them to make mine big!" he instructs David Young, his chief of staff, grinning in anticipation of a scheduled Blizzard stop.

There's a problem. The group is too big for everybody to choose their own flavor, so the staff has sensibly pre-ordered giant boxes of the Oreo Cookie variety.

"What?" Grassley bleats. "I want Snickers!"

My vision of Gregory Peck vanishes, replaced by Pee-wee Herman. For all Grassley's valiance on the Hill, in person, he is amazingly childlike. His pants hitch up into the back of his black sneakers. When he smiles, it's the huge, goofy grin of a boy posing for a school picture before he learns smiling is uncool. "What'd I do wrong?" he sometimes asks his staff, without provocation. As we were finishing up an interview on the bus, the senator pauses to ask his press secretary if it's all right if he doesn't visit the bathroom before eating lunch. "Right before leaving the last stop, I washed my hands," he says. "Is that okay?"

But I suspect the answer doesn't matter much to Grassley. He doesn't care what the grownups think. As I travel with him on tour, I realize it's just this attitude from which his good works flow.

Since his start in politics, Grassley has followed his own eccentric path. After college, he joined the Iowa state legislature, where the political upheavals of the 1960s largely passed him by as he dealt with such retro issues as temperance ("As a teetotaler, I was thinking people were drinking too much"). In 1974, he was elected to Congress, beating "a more competent person than I was," he recalls. By the time he got to the Senate in 1981, *Washingtonian* magazine promptly dubbed the hayseed freshman "Tweedle-Dumb," the second stupidest member of the body.

But, in 1983, Grassley stumbled across something that tweaked his frugal Midwestern sensibilities: binge-spending at the Defense Department (he would go



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on to express particular horror at the $435 dropped for a claw hammer—since, as a salt-of-the-earth type who had actually made use of a hammer, he knew they definitely should not cost $435). Grassley contacted a Pentagon employee who wanted to blow the whistle on the cost overruns, but Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and a Reagan political appointee named David Chu barred the two from meeting, thinking that the bumpkin from Iowa was too stupid to get around their injunctions. Grassley jumped into his little orange Chevette and drove over to the Pentagon himself. "It was kind of a simplistic thing where he said, 'If you're not going to be in my office like you promised, then I'm going to come over there and find out why not,'" says a former Grassley staffer. Grassley confronted Chu, succeeded in mounting a massively publicized hearing for the whistleblower, and, in the end, froze Reagan's defense budget.

Chu—the arrogant, faceless bureaucratic fixer—came to represent, for Grassley, what he had been put on Earth to fight. "This … *Mister Chu* … is still active in the administration somewhere," Grassley tells me with distaste on the bus. He went on to co-sponsor the 1986 False Claims Act, a bill to protect contractors who reveal that their companies are defrauding the government, and pushed for tough oversight throughout the rest of the '80s and '90s. But Grassley has a child's love of moral consistency, and his commitment to oversight, good government, and fighting against wasteful spending began to give birth to a whole separate way of living in Washington. At home in his Arlington town house, he keeps his air conditioning set to 80 degrees. Driving into the Senate garage, he turns off his car and coasts into his parking space to save gas. Although he attends his party's weekly luncheon, he does not eat because the meal costs $25. The culture of Grassley reached its apotheosis in the 2004 reelection campaign ad he aired in Iowa, where he posed atop an efficiency-maximizing Rube Goldberg–esque lawnmower he designed himself by welding two pull-mowers to the back of a seated one.

More than seeing him as an example to follow, though, Grassley's colleagues came to find him mystifying. To them, his insistence on including the Democratic ranking member in his Senate Finance work on the principle of bipartisanship was abdicating hard-won power. "It was a constant, constant criticism," Grassley admits. The sense of alienation is mutual. When I ask if he ever feels socially awkward in Washington, he replies gaily, "No, because I don't socialize in Washington!" He adds, "I can tell you the last time I was in another senator's home: John Cornyn's, two years ago."

His disregard for being popular among his Senate peers, his stubbornness, his moral absolutism—these qualities have inspired great battles against corruption, but they've also generated great bouts of obliviousness to the more nuanced operations of power. "There were trade-offs in working for him because he had integrity," explains the former staffer. During the 2003 negotiations over Bush's tax cut, for instance, Grassley made a promise to Senator George Voinovich that the cut would not be over $350 billion. Although both Bush and the House wanted a bigger cut, Grassley wouldn't consider going higher, triggering a bitter and public intraparty feud. "House Republicans were saying, 'This is ridiculous, this is ridiculous, we need some compromise,'" remembers a former House Republican aide who worked closely with Grassley to conference financial legislation. "Grassley just said, 'No, I don't care.'" Four years later, the aide is still angry about the episode. "I mean, really, what's the difference? Imagine going to the grocery and spending $100 in groceries, but not $100.55."

I got a taste of Grassley's literalism the morning I left Iowa. The day before, on the way to Des Moines, Grassley had invited me and any interested diplomats to join him on his morning jog. He seemed particularly excited to run with others. I was excited, too. After everybody had gone to bed, I even took a hotel shuttle out to a 24-hour Wal-Mart to buy new sneakers.

We were to meet the next morning in the hotel lobby at 5:15. At 5:16:30, my elevator deposited me downstairs: The senator was already gone.

Losing his Senate Finance chairmanship in January, Grassley was himself to the end. When incoming Democratic chairman Max Baucus presented him with the parting gift of a wooden gavel, Grassley groused, "It probably cost more than it should, and more than I would have spent on somebody else." Luckily, his colleagues knew him well: Baucus assured him that the gavel was not a new purchase but Grassley's old one. "OK, so it's worn out," Grassley said. "Thank you very much."

Grassley's behavior when he was in the majority means that, in the minority, he retains more power than Republicans who screwed their opposition counterparts. Baucus has scolded officials who appear inclined to pay less attention to the demoted Grassley, telling them, "If Chuck asks you something, it's like I asked you for it." Though Baucus is also worried about private equity, he's allowed Grassley to take as much—if not more—of the lead on the issue. It's a battle in which Grassley's passion for fair government can shine. His continued prominence also feels just because, out of all the Senate Republicans, he probably deserves the least blame for their 2006 catastrophe.

At the end of the bus ride to Des Moines, standing outside Dairy Queen—that special Snickers Blizzard did come through in the end—Grassley laments the Republicans' November loss. He's still stunned by what happened, and he even entertains the possibility that, via some convoluted mechanism, it might have been all his fault. Though he noticed his colleagues running wild, "I stood by the sidelines," he says.

The hypothesis is unconvincing. It's hard to imagine other Republicans would have accepted behavioral advice from a guy like Grassley. But at least—unlike other Republicans—he's willing to say he's sorry.

*Eve Fairbanks*



Brooks Kraft

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# THE JERK

*In praise of Ted Stevens, the Senate's angriest man.*

What made Ted Stevens such a famously bitter and vindictive man? Some people will tell you that the defining moment in the life of the powerful Alaska Republican senator, currently the target of a federal bribery investigation that threatens to end his storied career in disgrace, occurred at the end of an airport runway in 1978. In early December, Stevens was flying in a friend's small private plane from Juneau to Anchorage. The descending plane was just a few feet above the runway when it was caught by a sudden gust of wind that slammed it into the ground. Stevens somehow survived the crash. But five others aboard, including the senator's beloved wife, Anne, did not.

In what would become a familiar pattern, Stevens's first response was to lash out at a colleague. Stevens was taking the flight to a meeting about a major public-lands bill. He had worked intensely on the bill, but his rival in Alaska politics, then-Senator (and now fringe Democratic presidential candidate) Mike Gravel was trying to crush it. After returning to Washington, Stevens began murmuring that Gravel's political gamesmanship was indirectly to blame for the crash. His accusation became more specific in what a former Senate aide who was present calls "one of the most horrifying moments in the modern Senate." According to the aide (the story was also chronicled by *The Washington Post* at the time), Stevens hobbled into a Senate committee hearing a couple of months later on crutches and in bandages. With Gravel present, Stevens raised the topic of his reason for flying that fateful day. "I don't want to get personal about it," he told the stunned audience, "but I think if that bill had passed, I might have a wife sitting at home when I get home tonight, too."

"I felt very bad at the time," says Gravel today, adding: "Ted was a little bit emotionally destabilized by the death of his wife. It's understandable that he would have some recriminations and strike out at me since I had been such a policy opponent of his."

The aide who was present, and who has followed Stevens's career since, puts it a bit more bluntly: "I remember thinking that, when that happened, that Stevens had clearly lost his mind," he says. "I think that [crash] episode made him a really mean, bitter guy."

In the 30 years since, Stevens has continued to lash out at and threaten his colleagues for far less grave offenses, from opposing oil drilling in Alaska to blocking his obscene pet spending projects. "I'm a mean, miserable S.O.B.," he once proudly told his colleagues. And yet, he rose to awesome heights of influence in the Senate, controlling billions of dollars in public money. Now, with federal investigators closing in on him on charges that include accepting home renovations from an Alaska businessman to whom he steered lucrative federal contracts, the Gravel episode underscores a minor mystery of recent Washington politics: How was Ted Stevens able to turn the fear and loathing he engendered in others into a political asset? The answer to this question reveals not only Stevens's twisted genius for getting what he wants but also something about the Washington political culture that allowed him to run amok.

By now, Stevens's brazen schemes to funnel federal money back home to Alaska are well known: As chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee from 1997 to 2005, Stevens steered well over $3 billion in federal money back to Alaska. His recent funding priorities have included $176,000 for Alaskan reindeer herders, $3 million for the Arctic Winter Games, and $250,000 to celebrate Alaska's statehood—not to mention the infamous $278 million "Bridge to Nowhere," designed for an island with a population of 50 people. Less infamous but nearly as absurd is the $100 million Stevens has brought home for the University of Alaska's High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program, which began as a far-fetched investigation into harnessing the power of the aurora borealis. There's a reason that, when Stevens flies back to Anchorage, he lands at an airport named after himself: So dependent is Alaska on federal largesse that one local TV station recently speculated that the state's economy could suffer if the feds bring Stevens down.

Stevens has partly managed this feat through force of personality. While some people wear their personalities on their sleeve, the 83-year-old Stevens wears his



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around his neck, in the form of an Incredible Hulk necktie he dons for votes that will require his full fury. In 2003, Marvel Comics even threw a reception for Stevens to celebrate a new Hulk movie, at which one Hulk artist observed to a reporter, "The monster is basically fueled by aggression. If you stop him from being angry, then he gets weaker."

And so it is with Stevens, whose bitter disposition is legendary on Capitol Hill. In *Washingtonian* magazine's most recent annual "Best and Worst of Congress" contest—based on votes by congressional staffers—Stevens claimed first place for "Hottest Temper" and finished second for "Meanest." (For good measure, he also won the silver for "Fashion Victim," presumably thanks to his Hulk motifs.) When House Republicans stalled some pet projects Stevens sought a few years ago, he declared, "I'm just sorry they repealed the law on dueling. I'd have shot a couple of the sons of bitches." After the government-watchdog group Citizens Against Government Waste criticized his insatiable appetite for pork spending, Stevens branded them "idiots" and "a bunch of psychopaths."

Perhaps more than any other senator, Stevens obsesses over which of his colleagues are friends and which are enemies. "People who vote against this today are voting against me," he declared after one contentious vote on oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). "And I'll never forget it." After another Senate debate, Stevens announced that he had "written off" several friends in the Senate who had allegedly betrayed him. "I'm not traveling with them anymore, and I'm not going to play tennis or swim or do various things with them," he seethed. Even something as simple as an October 2005 dispute about amending a spending bill led Stevens to liken relations with his old friend, longtime Republican Senator John Warner of Virginia, to a cold war–era meltdown: "Our friendship is close to the brink, very close to the brink," he warned.

Stevens doesn't just end friendships—he gets revenge. (Or, as he has put it, "I don't make threats—only promises.") In the past, he has campaigned against colleagues who have angered him, and, in March 2006, he openly admitted to pulling a bill that would aid the Puget Sound shipping industry to spite Democratic Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington, who had crossed him over ANWR. As a result, no one wants to say no to The Hulk, lest they land atop his hit list. No less than then–Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle groveled at Stevens's feet after a 2001 episode in which the two had clashed on the Senate floor. Even though Stevens had been his typical obnoxious self, complaining publicly that Daschle's legislative maneuverings had been delaying his fishing vacation ("the urgent call of the pink salmon") and Daschle had only rebuked him mildly, Stevens fumed that Daschle had taken "a cheap shot"—enough to force the majority leader to phone the bristling Alaskan with his sincere apologies.

STEVENS HIMSELF admits that he uses his anger as a tactical weapon. "I want them to believe that I'll make their life miserable if they don't listen to me," he said of his colleagues in 1997. "I grew up at a time when people learned how to use their temper, not lose their temper," Stevens told another interviewer in 2003. (Even his dramatic *j'accuse* of Gravel after the death of his wife, after all, was in the service of getting his lands-use bill passed.)

But the explanation for Stevens's success is more complicated than just the fact that he's a bully. Many of Stevens's colleagues afford a grudging respect for him. In part that's because, in spite of his outbursts, Stevens has a certain old-fashioned integrity: He keeps his word and is fiercely loyal to his friends. According to one Senate aide, Stevens was constantly by the side of his dear friend Democrat Daniel Inouye when the Hawaii senator's wife died last year. (Inouye reciprocated last month by touring Alaska with Stevens in his hour of distress, telling the local press that coverage of his ethics woes is "overkill" and saying that, if it weren't for Stevens's earmarking, "Alaska would be in the Stone Age.")

Meanwhile, the Senate itself has changed since Stevens arrived in the late '60s. Backroom dealers like Stevens are gradually being replaced by a new generation of seat-purchasing millionaire neophytes who stand for little but the image they pay handlers to maintain. "I much prefer to deal with him than people who slap you on the back and lie like hell," David Obey, the Democratic chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, told *The Hill* in 2003. "You know where he stands," George W. Bush said at a 2002 campaign fundraiser for Stevens: "[T]here's no bull about him." Even Mike Gravel concedes that he "personally like[s]" Stevens.

In a city that grows ever more phony, Stevens won a strange admiration for being—a jerk, yes—but an *authentic* jerk. An honest jerk. But it now seems likely that Stevens went too far: that, after enriching Alaska, he felt entitled to enrich himself. If he's found guilty, Stevens will have hastened the demise of Congress's cranky old bulls. What good, after all, is a jerk you can't trust?

*MICHAEL CROWLEY*

## THE *OTHER* TED STEVENS

MCT/LANDOV

*Alaska Representative Don Young is uncannily similar to his state's senior senator. The obnoxious Republican hates environmentalists, abuses his colleagues, and plunders the national treasury for the economic benefit of the forty-ninth state. Below, a choice sampling of his ire:*

"A self-centered bunch of waffle-stomping, Harvard-graduating, intellectual idiots." *—On environmentalists, Bureau of National Affairs' DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT, December 1994*

"Those who bite me will be bitten back." *—Speaking on the House floor, July 2007*

"I stuffed it like a turkey." *—On inserting pork—including the infamous "Bridge to Nowhere"—into a House transportation bill, ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS, December 30, 2003*

"That is the dumbest thing I've ever heard." *—Response to the suggestion that Alaska return some pork dollars to aid Katrina victims, FAIRBANKS DAILY NEWS-MINER, September 21, 2005*

"I'd like to be a little oinker, myself. If he's chief porker I'm upset." *—On Ted Stevens, at a luncheon for Ketchikan Republicans, 2004*

"Environmentalists are a socialist group of individuals that are the tool of the Democratic Party. I'm proud to say that they are my enemy. They are not Americans, never have been Americans, never will be Americans." *—On environmentalists, again, Alaska Public Radio, August 19, 1996*

"Butt-fucking. You think that's art?" *—Speaking to Alaska high school students about federal arts funding, 1995*



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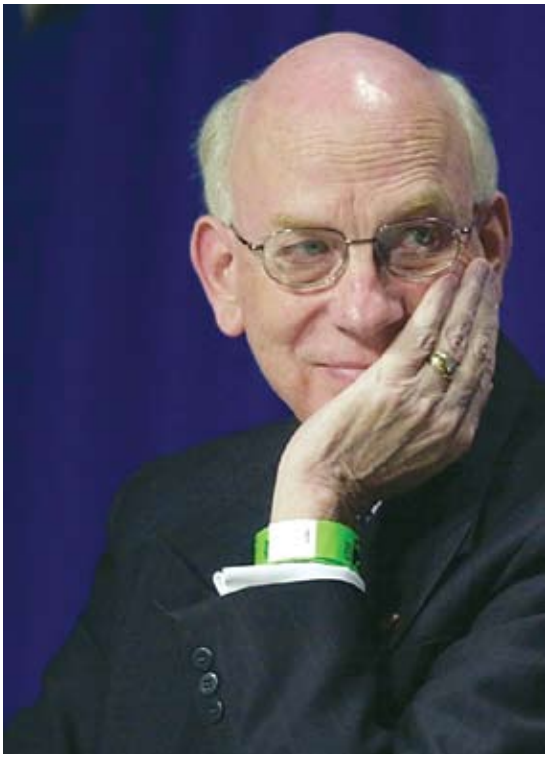

AP PHOTO/DOUGLAS C. PIZAC

# MEDICAL MIRACLE

*Universal health care's most surprising advocate.*

THE GATHERING took place in late May, at a conference center some 80 miles north of Salt Lake City. To the casual observer, it would have seemed like a rather ordinary businessmen's meeting. Inside a windowless room with handsome wood paneling, about 300 people sat at round tables, sipping juice and finishing off eggs from the hot breakfast buffet. Up on the stage, a tall, gangly figure worked his way through a rudimentary PowerPoint presentation. He spoke crisply but in a relative monotone; with the lights dimmed, a few audience members nodded off. But those who stayed awake saw a remarkable speech—and, potentially, an important one. That's because the man at the podium was Bob Bennett, the Republican senator from Utah. And he was there to champion his new favorite cause: universal health insurance.

Step by step, he made the same statistical case for action that Democrats have been making for years. More and more people were losing their health insurance; even those who had it were struggling to pay their bills. Employers who gave their workers coverage were in trouble, too. Bennett assured the audience, a typically conservative slice of Utah's small-business community, that he shared their disdain for the familiar liberal solution of having government insure everybody through a so-called single-payer system. But, he explained, there was an alternative based on free-market principles. It was a bill proposed by one of his Democratic colleagues, Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon. Everybody would have insurance, but, Bennett promised, it would be private coverage rather than a new government program. Competition, not government edicts, would hold down costs. The Wyden bill wasn't perfect, Bennett said, but it was an awfully good start—so much so that, just a few weeks before, he had agreed to co-sponsor the measure.

The audience responded positively to Bennett's message, just as two of his Republican Senate colleagues—Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Judd Gregg of New Hampshire—have done in the last month. And, while that's a total of just three co-sponsors out of a Republican delegation numbering 49, it's a significant development all the same. For most of recent memory, Republican lawmakers in Washington have followed a dictum first issued by Bill Kristol during the 1994 Clintoncare fight: Oppose universal health insurance "sight unseen." But now the right's political outlook seems to be changing. The rising cost of health insurance has rattled some Republican-leaning interest groups, mainly large employers seeking relief from skyrocketing employee health premiums. Two prominent Republican governors, Mitt Romney in Massachusetts and Arnold Schwarzenegger in California, have embraced universal coverage schemes for their states. Given Bennett's standing in the party—he's widely respected and known to be close to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell—it seems likely he'll win more converts soon.

But then what? Bennett's stated reservations about elements of the Wyden proposal aren't exactly surprising, given that Wyden is one of the Senate's most liberal members and Bennett is a bona fide conservative. And those objections seem mild when compared to what the other co-sponsors have said. When Gregg announced his support for the bill, known formally as the "Healthy Americans Act," he issued so many caveats that it was fair to wonder what, exactly, he had agreed to endorse. In 1994, Republican support for compromise health care reforms eventually proved hollow; then–Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole ended up disavowing not one but two universal coverage bills he had previously co-sponsored. Bennett's enthusiasm is encouraging, to be sure, but is there reason to think that he—or his party—will act differently this time?

BENNETT'S OWN history on health care traces back to the battle over the Clinton plan, when—as a junior senator in his second year—he served as one of several Republican henchmen charged with blocking the initiative. As Bennett explained to me during an interview, the Senate GOP leadership set up a working group with about a half-dozen senators, assigning each one part of the Clinton plan—with orders to research it and develop convincing arguments against it. They met twice daily and, eventually, honed an effective strategy for derailing reform: seize on a controversial provision, develop a stinging critique, and then take that message to the public. By summer, when then–Majority Leader George Mitchell had ditched the politically unviable Clinton plan and substituted his own alternative, the work became easy—since, according to Bennett, the hastily drafted scheme was full of ill-conceived provisions. "Whichever senator got today's clunker would go after Mitchell—and then [Mitchell] would have to admit that this was really bad, have an amendment to take it out, and then the next day it would come down," Bennett recalls. "Eventually, he had to pull the whole bill down."

Today, Bennett says he watched the demise of Clintoncare with more sadness than anger. And, as a former businessman who recalls his own frustrations dealing with employee health insurance, he says he hoped to revisit the issue in 1995, once Republicans took over Congress. Dole agreed to let Bennett lead the Republican task force on health care—a group that the late Rhode Island Senator John Chafee had led during the Clintoncare fight and that had nearly devised a successful compromise plan. But Bennett says the "moment of exhilaration … lasted until the first meeting," once it became apparent that a lowly task force would have no power now that Republicans controlled their own committees. And, while those committees would enact some modest health care reform measures, like the State Children's Health Insurance Program, universal coverage vanished from the congressional agenda.

That's how things remained until the past fall, when Democrats won back Congress and, seizing the opportunity, Wyden



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first introduced the Healthy Americans Act. Although Wyden had not been a pivotal player on health care like, say, Ted Kennedy or Jay Rockefeller, his plan was noteworthy for its ambition. Eschewing the incremental approach of recent years, Wyden wanted to insure every single American. At the same time, Wyden knew that passing a bill meant overcoming the inevitable filibuster from opponents, which meant getting 60 votes, which in turn meant winning over at least some Republicans. So, rather than call for creating a new government insurance program or expanding existing ones—non-starters on the right—Wyden proposed creating a marketplace through which everybody could buy private insurance. The insurance would have to have generous benefits, which meant offering something like what members of Congress get; it would have to be affordable, which meant providing lower-income Americans with subsidies; and it would have to be available to everybody, which meant forcing the insurance companies to sell to all comers, regardless of pre-existing medical conditions. But it would still be private insurance. And, since people would be shopping around for coverage, insurance companies would theoretically have to compete for their business based on price and quality—unleashing the kind of market forces in which conservatives have faith.

As Wyden went door to door, making his pitch, Republican colleagues were friendly but skeptical—Bennett among them. "I said the standard thing any senator says: 'Well, I'll have a look at it,'" Bennett remembers. "That's as firm a 'no' as you're going to get." But, when he dispatched a staffer to review the Wyden plan, the response surprised him: There seemed to be a lot of common ground. Like many conservatives, Bennett had come to believe the fundamental problem with health insurance was the fact that most working people get coverage through their employers, who select the type of coverage and pay a large share of the premiums directly—thereby taking away employees' choice and insulating them from the real cost of their medical care. The Healthy Americans Act essentially eliminated the employer system altogether. Bennett, like many of his GOP colleagues, had also become very concerned about the unhealthy lifestyles of many Americans—and the way those habits contributed to rising health care costs. Wyden's bill proposed to address this problem, too, by offering financial incentives for enrolling in wellness programs. After checking with McConnell to make sure he wouldn't run afoul of the party leadership, Bennett agreed to hold formal conversations with Wyden. (Wyden sought, and received, the same blessing from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.) Eventually, he signed on, with the caveat that he was endorsing the general approach but not every specific feature.

How big a deal was this? Under the Healthy Americans Act, the federal government would discourage insurance companies from competing to avoid medically risky beneficiaries—the way they do now—by prohibiting insurers from discriminating based on pre-existing conditions. That's a whole lot of regulation. People with high incomes and generous health benefits would end up losing some of their existing tax breaks—which is to say, they would pay (slightly) higher taxes. Some conservatives are sure to attack that. And, of course, it would achieve universal coverage—the traditional Republican bugaboo. But Bennett has signed on to these features and, on more than one occasion, defended them. At a recent event co-sponsored by the Heritage Foundation and the New America Foundation, a questioner asked Bennett what he would tell a critic who called the plan a tax hike. Bennett retorted that such a critic is "incapable of reading a piece of legislation," since the plan simply makes explicit—and redistributes more equitably—the hidden payments people already make for the nation's health care bill.

Still, there are sticking points. Early on, Bennett objected to Wyden's promise that all Americans would have insurance "as good as" the coverage members of Congress get. Bennett thought that promised too much; the federal employee system (through which members get their coverage) offers a menu of choices, with higher prices for more generous plans, and he saw no reason to promise the high-end plans for which most members of Congress presumably opt. And, while that issue was easy to finesse—Bennett just talks about giving all Americans the "same choices" that members have—it's fair to wonder how many other Republicans would go as far as Bennett has. Among the "serious concerns" Judd Gregg enumerated in his endorsement was "the imposition of mandates." But it's the mandates—on individuals to buy insurance, on businesses to help pay for it, and on insurers to provide it in a fair and equitable way—that make the plan work. Without them, the Healthy Americans Act would quite literally fall apart.

Not that Gregg's reticence is surprising. All the mandates and regulation in the Healthy Americans Act really are pretty antithetical to modern conservatism—more, perhaps, than Bennett wants to admit. It may not be government-run insurance, but it's still more government—a lot more, as a matter of fact. At one point during our interview, I noted that new state agencies would get heavily involved in the business of buying and selling health insurance—screening private insurance companies to enforce standards for pricing and benefits and acting as a conduit through which people would actually select their coverage. In effect, they would become giant purchasing cooperatives—which, as it happens, is more or less what the dreaded Clinton plan would have done. Bennett denied the similarity, but his explanation wasn't particularly convincing—and it was fair to wonder whether he, or other potential GOP supporters, might change their minds once Congress takes up the issue seriously. Moreover, will bipartisanship still sound appealing if it means passing a bill for which Democrats will, undoubtedly, get most of the credit?

Bennett thinks there is plenty of political credit to go around—and warns that a strategy of pure obstruction could simply build momentum for a single-payer system. (This is one of many reasons why it's so important to keep single-payer part of the conversation; it scares opponents.) And at least one veteran of the Clinton effort—New America economist Len Nichols, who helped craft the Healthy Americans Act—is equally optimistic: "Is there enough common ground to build a real reform? Absolutely."

Even my own skepticism waned a little after speaking to Bill Johnson of Vernal, Utah, who attended Bennett's speech back in May. About ten years ago, Johnson told me, he had to sell his small mobile home construction company and take a job with a bank, in good part because his wife had developed several chronic conditions, rendering her uninsurable in the individual market. "I think she takes about twenty-five different drugs," Johnson said, "and if we had to pay for them out of pocket, we'd go bankrupt in a pretty short amount of time." Johnson called himself "a pretty staunch right-wing type of person … pretty typical for us out in Utah." As such, universal health insurance was not an idea he had entertained seriously—until he saw Bennett's presentation. "I'm not going to say we should implement this thing tomorrow, but let's take a closer look at it," he said. Given the history of conservative thinking on health care, that's progress.

*Jonathan Cohn*



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*You deserve a factual look at . . .*

# The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

## What can the world, what can the USA, what can Israel do about it?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared publicly – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel must be "wiped off the map." That effort, the destruction of Israel, seems to be the main goal of Iranian policy. When Iranian missiles are paraded through the streets of Tehran, the destination "to Jerusalem" is clearly stenciled on them.

### What are the facts?

**A death wish for Israel.** Ahmadinejad and the ayatollah who is the "supreme leader" have publicly mused that one or two nuclear bombs would obliterate Israel, but that, though it would cause devastating damage and millions of casualties, Iran would survive Israel's retaliatory attack. Iran is a huge country, with about 60 million inhabitants, so they are probably correct. And who can doubt that those religious fanatics would not hesitate to allow the destruction of much of their country and to sacrifice a third or even one-half of their population in order to eliminate the hated Jewish state? When our country was entangled with the Soviet Union in the bitter 40-year long "cold war," with both sides having sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the opponent's country and its people, things were kept in place by MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. However "evil" the leaders of the Soviet Union (the "Evil Empire") may have been, there was one great consolation and assurance: They were not crazy. But the Iranians and other Muslims are crazies, as we understand the concept. Because they take instructions directly from Allah, who tells them to kill the Jews and other infidels, whatever the cost.

> "An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense."

Israel has no problem with Iran. They share no borders and have no territorial dispute. In fact, they face common Arab enemies and should be natural allies, as they indeed were under the Shah. Iran's death wish for Israel is based entirely on religious fanaticism. In contrast even to the intractable North Koreans, the determination of the Iranians is immutable. It cannot be changed by persuasion, by diplomacy, by sanctions or by threats.

Once Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, it will not only be a deadly danger to Israel, but to all of the Middle East and to virtually all of Europe. The flow of oil from the Middle East, the lifeblood of the industrialized world, would be totally under its control and so would be the economies of all nations of the world, very much including the United States.

**What is to be done?** In 1981, then prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin, being aware of Iraq's nuclear ambitions and looming realization of those ambitions, decided that its nuclear reactor at Osiraq had to be destroyed. The IAF (Israeli Air Force) accomplished that in a daring and unprecedented raid. Iraq's nuclear capability was eliminated in one stroke, never to rise up again. Israel had done the world an enormous service. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and, without question, also of Saudi Arabia and its enormous oil fields, and, for that matter, of Iran, could not have been prevented. Saddam Hussein would have been the ruler of the world.

The solution to the deadly threat that Iran poses to the world is obvious. Of course, diplomacy and persuasion, threats and promises, sticks and carrots – every possible means short of military action – should be used until it becomes clear even to the most obdurate that nothing can deviate Iran from its chosen path of becoming a nuclear power and to dominate the Middle East.

There is reason to believe that the people of Iran, especially the young people, oppose the oppressive and theocratic regime of their country and are hostile to the mullahs who control everything. But the government has the tools of power firmly in its hands. It controls the instruments of coercion – it can kill people and it controls the oil money. While it would be most desirable and in the interest of the world to be able to foment an overthrow of the Iranian regime, that is an unrealistic and unattainable prospect.

Regrettably, there is only one solution to the terrible dilemma confronting the world, the unacceptable danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. The terror, the destruction and the 60 million dead of World War II could have been prevented at several times during the Nazi regime. But the Allied powers, under the leadership of Britain's prime minister Neville Chamberlain, opted for appeasement and for "peace in our time." We cannot afford to make that same mistake again. The world must give Iran an ultimatum: Desist immediately from the development of nuclear weapons; if you do not, we shall destroy the facilities that produce them. There still is a window of opportunity to do that. That window may close very soon. But who would do the job? The United States would be the obvious choice. But if the United States were in accord, Israel could do it, just as it did the job in 1981 in destroying Iraq's nuclear potential once and for all.

An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense. Nobody really knows for sure how far Iran is from reaching its goal — six months. six years? The experts disagree. But if Iran is not stopped now, it may well be too late not very long from now.

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# Change of Heartland

*What's not the matter with Kansas.*

JOHN B. JUDIS

*Manhattan, Kansas*

The debate between Representative Dennis Moore and his Republican challenger Phill Kline in October 2000 had yet to begin, and I was roaming the halls of Shawnee Mission South High School looking for Kansans to interview. I came upon a diminutive, nattily dressed man who seemed to be looking for a reporter to engage. What were Kline's chances of unseating Moore, I asked him. Moore didn't stand a chance, he assured me. "In Kansas, there really is no Democratic Party," he explained. "There are only two wings of the Republican Party." When I asked for the man's name, he replied incredulously that he was Senator Sam Brownback.

To a journalist from Washington, Brownback wasn't all that recognizable a figure back in 2000. Yet his significance in Kansas politics was beyond dispute. Both he and Kline owed their political rise to the same phenomenon: a sharp rightward turn in local politics that had taken place over the course of a decade. Four years later, Thomas Frank (now a TNR contributor) would bemoan this state of affairs in his bestselling book *What's the Matter with Kansas?*. Thanks mainly to Frank, the story of how Kansas had been taken over by conservative ideologues would become, in the minds of Democrats nationwide, a symbol for the abysmal state of their party and their cause.

At the time I spoke to him, Brownback had plenty of reason to be confident that Kline would win the following month. Moore was the only Democrat in Kansas's congressional delegation, having won a close race in 1998. Republicans held a three-to-two statewide edge in party registration, and they controlled the major state offices as well as both houses of the legislature. Of the 22 state representatives from Johnson County—the heart of Moore's district—only one was a Democrat.

Yet Brownback turned out to be wrong—not just about Kline but about Kansas's Democratic Party as well. Moore won reelection by 50 to 47 percent and, over the next six years, solidified his hold on the seat. Democrat Kathleen Sebelius won the governorship in 2002 and was reelected by a landslide in 2006. In last fall's election, two former Republicans who had become Democrats captured the other top positions in the state, and another ex-Republican upset a five-term GOP incumbent. Today, Democrats control half of Kansas's U.S. House seats. And, as 2008 approaches, another prominent Republican has decided to switch parties to run as a Democrat.

None of this means that Kansas is turning blue. It is doubtful, for instance, that a liberal Democrat could carry the state in next year's presidential election. But, like Indiana, Nebraska, and other reputedly red states, Kansas has become politically competitive. The one-party state that Brownback spoke of in 2000 no longer exists. For that, the Kansas senator can blame demography, the Bush administration, and—well, himself.

Kansas has long been given to bouts of political fervor—even if they weren't always conservative ones. The state's ties to the GOP go back to the 1850s and the party's founding commitment to free land, free soil, and free labor. After the Civil War, Kansans retained their allegiance to the Republican Party in much the same way post-bellum white Mississippians remained Democrats. Kansas also retained the zeal of John Brown and the abolitionists, becoming the home of temperance crusader Carrie Nation as well as a hotbed of the Populist movement. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Populists had disappeared as an organized party and Kansas had returned to the Republican fold, but you can still find traces of anti–Wall Street, anti-corporate sentiment in the state's small towns and rural areas.

For most of the twentieth century, Kansas was dominated by moderate Republicans—Alf Landon, Dwight Eisenhower, Bob Dole, Nancy Landon Kassebaum—who generally backed civil rights and the rudiments of the welfare state. They took different positions on abortion—Dole was pro-life and Kassebaum was pro-choice—but were essentially moderate on social issues.

By the late 1980s, however, with Ronald Reagan's election and the rise of the new right, Kansas politics had begun to regain its earlier fervor. John Brown and Carrie Nation returned, but this time as anti-abortion agitators. As Frank recounts in his book, the Kansas pro-life movement came of age during the summer of 1991 in blue-collar Wichita. In what became known as the "Summer of Mercy," Operation Rescue tried to shut down area clinics that performed abortions. At the end of August that year, 35,000 protestors jammed a stadium at Wichita State University to hear Pat Robertson and to commit themselves to transforming the state's politics.

When, in response, moderate Republicans in Topeka attempted to pass an abortion-rights bill that would have prevented challenges to *Roe* v. *Wade*, the pro-life movement started organizing to take over the Republican Party. By 1995, pro-lifers controlled many local GOP committees and the party's state chairmanship. While their signature issue was abortion, they also adopted the agenda of the national right—including opposition to gun control, support for tax cuts, and hostility toward government spending. Kansas State political scientist Joe Aistrup calls these conservatives—who wanted to expand government's regulation of personal life while shrinking its economic role—"bipolar Republicans."

The Kansas conservatives showed their muscle in 1996, after the moderate Republican governor, Bill Graves, appointed his like-minded lieutenant governor, Sheila Frahm, to fill Bob Dole's vacated Senate seat. The conservatives recruited Brownback, a wealthy Kansan who had become an anti-abortion crusader in the House, to oust Frahm in the subsequent primary. After that, the conflict between the moderates and the conservatives only grew more heated. In 1998, the two factions began to fight about education as well as abortion. The conservatives won control of the state board of education and promptly removed the requirement that high school biology courses teach evolution. That provoked an outcry from the moderates, who won back a majority on



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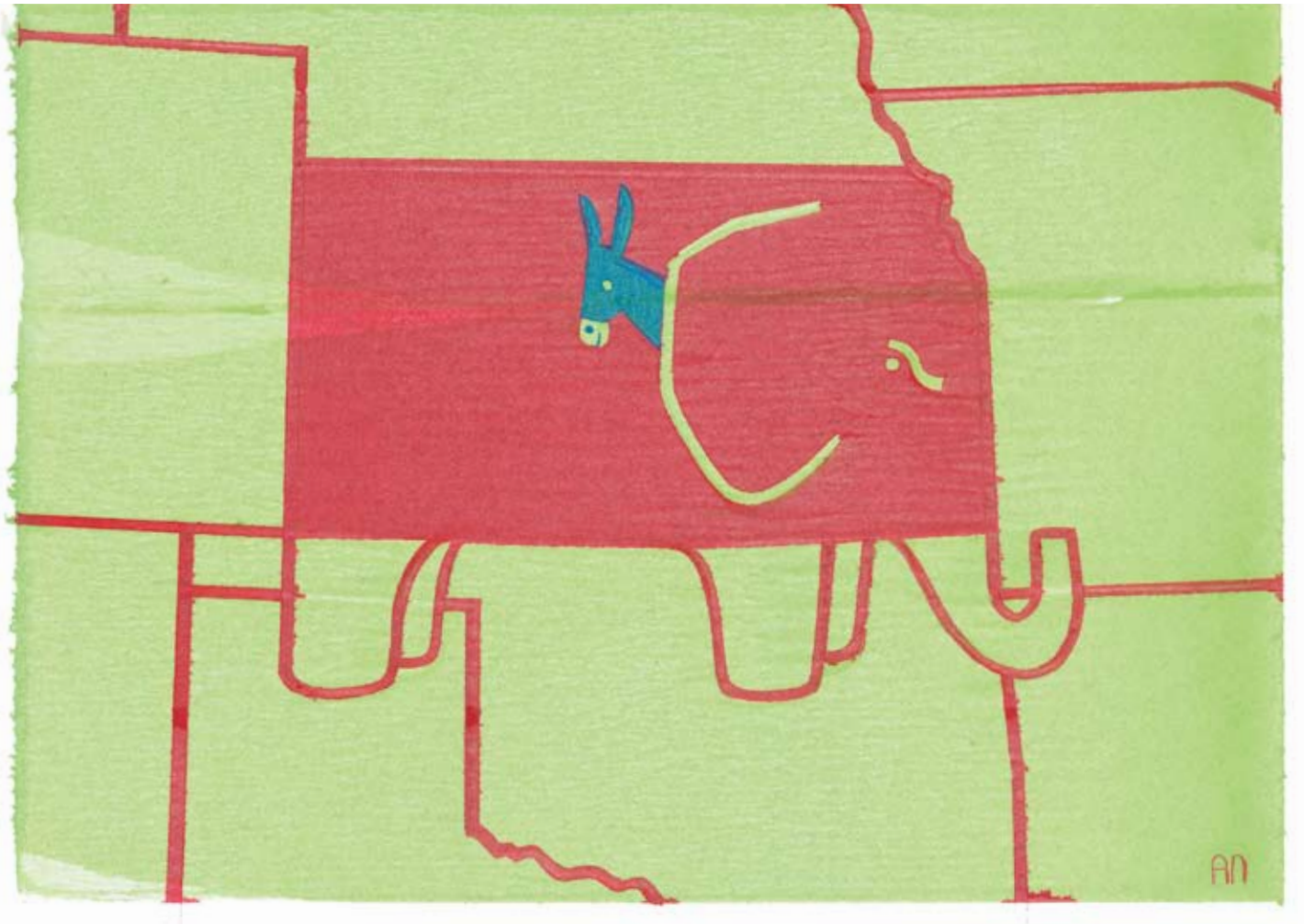
the board in 2000 only to see the conservatives reclaim control in 2004. Last year, the board flipped yet again, this time back to the moderates.

As the bitterness grew, many moderate Republicans stopped voting for conservatives in general elections, and some moderate Republican politicians, wary of trying to win nominations in a GOP dominated by conservatives, began to consider switching parties. By declaring war on moderates in their own party, conservatives ended up empowering Democrats. Brownback and his ilk, it seemed, had overreached.

But GOP infighting alone might not have breathed new life into the Democratic Party had it not been for the rise of a new group of moderate Republicans and independent voters clustered in the state's largest and fastest growing county. Once a mere suburb of Kansas City, Missouri, Johnson County, which contains almost 20 percent of the state's population, was transformed during the 1990s into an urban-suburban area with a concentration of financial and telecommunications firms. In the early part of the decade, the county had been known for its religious-right activists, who were based primarily in Shawnee and Olathe. (See Peter Beinart, "Battle for the Burbs," October 19, 1998.) But those two towns are overshadowed by even more affluent and populous parts of the county. And the professionals and middle-managers who live in *those* areas are largely moderate Republicans. These voters were happy to support a Republican like Graves, but they heartily disliked the conservatives who had been trying to take over the state GOP—not just for their stands on abortion and evolution, but also for their reluctance to support spending on education and high-tech research and development.

Kansas's third congressional district is dominated by Johnson County but also includes small, Democratic Wyandotte County, which contains a nonwhite majority, and liberal Lawrence, home to the University of Kansas. In 1996, moderate Republican Jan Meyers, who held the third district's seat, retired. She was succeeded by Olathe lawyer Vince Snowbarger, who was backed by the Christian right. In 1998, Moore, a Democrat who had been the district attorney of Johnson County, challenged the unimpressive Snowbarger. Because of Snowbarger's identification with the religious right, Moore commanded the support of prominent Republicans en route to victory. In 2000, he successfully defended his seat, despite Brownback's confidence that he would lose. And, with each successive election, the list of Republicans supporting Moore has grown. In 2006, he trounced his right-wing challenger by 30 points.

The combination of a fratricidal GOP and a rapidly expanding Johnson County electorate also help explain Democratic triumphs statewide. Last year, Kathleen Sebelius—the centrist Democratic governor first elected in 2002—coasted to reelection. But perhaps even more noteworthy were victories by two ex-Republicans from Johnson County who ran alongside her: Former GOP state chairman Mark Parkinson ran for lieutenant governor on the Sebelius ticket,




Alex Nabaum



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while Paul Morrison, Johnson County's district attorney, switched parties so he could run for state attorney general as a Democrat.

No contest better epitomized the clash between the new breed of Kansas Democrat and the Republican right than the race between Morrison and Phill Kline—who, after losing to Moore in 2000, was elected state attorney general in 2002. The balding, mustachioed Morrison, who speaks in a whisper, projects the image of the strong and silent Western lawman. When I interviewed him this summer in his Capitol office, he protested that he was "about as nonpartisan a person as you are going to find." He says he changed parties because "the people who were in leadership in the Republican Party, both in the county and state, weren't particularly interested in the things I was interested in. In fact, they weren't interested in the things most Kansans were interested in. One issue seems to drive what they do." That issue, of course, is abortion.

The square-jawed Kline comes off as a clean-cut Kansan, but when he speaks one hears echoes of the fanaticism he nourished during his previous career in talk radio. As a state legislator from Shawnee in the '90s, Kline was the typical bipolar Republican, advocating draconian tax cuts and restrictions on abortion. As attorney general, he focused on prosecuting abortion providers, sought private records of women who had undergone abortions, and even appointed an abortion protester—who had been arrested twelve times and who had no apparent interest in any other issue—to head the state's consumer-protection division. He also encouraged members of the state board of education to affix a sticker to biology textbooks declaring that evolution was a theory, not a fact. Morrison routed him by 16 points.

In the months since Morrison's triumph, Johnson County has continued to provide good news for Kansas Democrats. In Olathe, the conservative exurb, the recently retired superintendent of schools, Ron Wimmer, has announced that he is switching parties to run for the state Senate as a Democrat. Wimmer was put off by right-wing support for vouchers and creation science and by conservative opposition to funding a research center in Johnson County, but he has also been appalled by the conduct of the Bush administration. "I would rather not comment on the performance of the president of the United States," he told me. "I am afraid I wouldn't have good things to say." If Wimmer wins—and he seems to have a good chance—he will have given the lie to the prevailing theory that exurbs like Olathe can provide conservative Republicans with a lasting majority nationwide.

Johnson County isn't the only place in Kansas where Democrats have made gains. The most surprising election of 2006 took place in a congressional district that includes Topeka and Manhattan but is dominated by traditionally conservative, rural counties stretching from the northeast to the southeast corner of the state. The winner there was Democrat Nancy Boyda, a feisty political novice—and yet another ex-Republican.

A chemist, Boyda had previously worked for the EPA and pharmaceutical companies. Like her parents and siblings, she voted Republican. But she became disenchanted with the GOP over Iraq and switched parties. In 2004, she challenged incumbent Republican Jim Ryun. That proved a daunting task. Outside of liberal Manhattan and Topeka, she encountered skepticism about her party affiliation, her qualified support for abortion rights, and her opposition to the war. She lost, 56 to 41 percent.

But, in 2006, she challenged Ryun again and found that voters had begun to turn against both the war and the Bush administration. Ryun, a former track star, had long campaigned as a champion of "family values," but in Washington he had become closely associated with K Street lobbyists, including Tom DeLay's former chief of staff Ed Buckham. So Boyda campaigned against the war, but she also highlighted Ryun's ties to K Street. She discovered what other Democratic candidates in the Midwest discovered last November: that, in the shadow of Iraq and Beltway corruption, small-town and rural voters were directing their populist resentment of elites not at Democratic support for gay marriage and abortion but rather at the administration's deception about Iraq and Republican ties to big business. Enough of these voters switched their allegiance from Ryun to Boyda to give her a four-point win.

To be sure, Boyda's seat will not be easy to defend next year. Already, Ryun has announced his intention to reclaim his perch, and Boyda says she is nervous about being painted as a "peacenik" or a "tree-hugger." Still, she has a few things going for her. At a community event I attended with her in the small town of Burlington, disillusionment with Bush and with corporate Washington was rife. Boyda's constituents were up in arms over illegal immigrants and gas prices, but they tended to blame Bush and his allies for both. "Big business is the key," a retired pipeline supervisor declared. "It controls government, it controls everything." And, once again, the Kansas Republican Party's bitter divisions may prove to be Democrats' greatest advantage: Ryun is likely to be challenged in the primary by State Treasurer Lynn Jenkins, a moderate. The two are already attacking each other.

In *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, Thomas Frank plays down recent changes in state politics. He sees ex-Republicans like Morrison, Wimmer, and Boyda as Republicans in disguise, excessively sympathetic to business and unlikely to aid the liberal agenda. Even with such politicians changing sides, he writes, "the issues that motivated our parents' Democratic party will be permanently off the table." And it's true: Kansas is not Massachusetts, and Dennis Moore and Nancy Boyda are not going to vote like Barney Frank or Ed Markey. But Kansas is still changing—and changing in a significant way. The conversion of Parkinson, Morrison, and Boyda—and the success of moderate Democrats like Sebelius and Moore—has meant the defeat of conservatives. Driving Phill Kline and Jim Ryun from power is no small accomplishment.

Moreover, Democratic moderates are not simply Republicans in disguise. Moore and Boyda vote for Democratic leaders in Congress. They may not support full-blown national health care, but they will oppose the privatization of Social Security and Medicare. Boyda says she is no "tree-hugger," but, as a former chemist, she understands global warming and wants to do something about it. And, though she was threatened by MoveOn.org for refusing to cut funds for the military in Iraq, she has also voted for withdrawal—a courageous stand for someone who represents Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth. If moderates like her can continue to win, it will signify an important shift in the Sunflower State—from right to center, from Brownback Republicans to Sebelius Democrats, from radicalism to relative sanity. There may still be things the matter with Kansas, but politics won't be one of them. ◆

ANTHONY RUSSO



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# Flight of the Wingnuts

*How a cult hijacked American politics.*

**JONATHAN CHAIT**

American politics has been hijacked by a tiny coterie of right-wing economic extremists, some of them ideological zealots, others merely greedy, a few of them possibly insane. The scope of their triumph is breathtaking. Over the course of the last three decades, they have moved from the right-wing fringe to the commanding heights of the national agenda. Notions that would have been laughed at a generation ago—that cutting taxes for the very rich is the best response to any and every economic circumstance or that it is perfectly appropriate to turn the most rapacious and self-interested elements of the business lobby into essentially an arm of the federal government—are now so pervasive, they barely attract any notice.

The result has been a slow-motion disaster. Income inequality has approached levels normally associated with Third World oligarchies, not healthy Western democracies. The federal government has grown so encrusted with business lobbyists that it can no longer meet the great public challenges of our time. Not even many conservative voters or intellectuals find the result congenial. Government is no smaller—it is simply more debt-ridden and more beholden to wealthy elites.

It was not always this way. A generation ago, Republican economics was relentlessly sober. Republicans concerned themselves with such ills as deficits, inflation, and excessive spending. They did not care very much about cutting taxes, and (as in the case of such GOP presidents as Herbert Hoover and Gerald Ford) they were quite willing to raise taxes in order to balance the budget. While many of them were wealthy and close to business, the leaders of business themselves had a strong sense of social responsibility that transcended their class interests. By temperament, such men were cautious rather than utopian.

Over the last three decades, however, such Republicans have passed almost completely from the scene, at least in Washington, to be replaced by, essentially, a cult.

All sects have their founding myths, many of them involving circumstances quite mundane. The cult in question generally traces its political origins to a meeting in Washington in late 1974 between Arthur Laffer, an economist; Jude Wanniski, an editorial page writer for *The Wall Street Journal;* and Dick Cheney, then–deputy assistant to President Ford. Wanniski, an eccentric and highly excitable man, had until the previous few years no training in economics whatsoever, but he had taken Laffer's tutelage.

His choice of mentor was certainly unconventional. Laffer had been on the economics faculty at the University of Chicago since 1967. In 1970, his mentor, George Shultz, brought him to Washington to serve as a staffer in the Office of Management and Budget. Laffer quickly suffered a bout with infamy when he made a wildly unconventional calculation about the size of the 1971 Gross National Product, which was far more optimistic than estimates elsewhere. When it was discovered that Laffer had used just four indicators to arrive at his figure—most economists used hundreds if not thousands of inputs—he became a Washington laughingstock. Indeed, he turned out to be horribly wrong. Laffer left the government in disgrace and faced the scorn of his former academic colleagues yet stayed in touch with Wanniski, whom he had met in Washington, and continued to tutor him in economics.

*Arthur Laffer has the last laff.*

WALTER BENNETT/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY

Starting in 1972, Wanniski came to believe that Laffer had developed a blinding new insight that turned established economic wisdom on its head. Wanniski and Laffer believed it was possible to simultaneously expand the economy and tamp down inflation by cutting taxes, especially the high tax rates faced by upper-income earners. Respectable economists—not least among them conservative ones—considered this laughable. Wanniski, though, was ever more certain of its truth. He promoted this radical new doctrine through his perch on *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page and in a major article for *The Public Interest*, a journal published by the neoconservative godfather Irving Kristol. Yet Wanniski's new doctrine, later to be called supply-side economics, had failed to win much of a following

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*This piece is adapted from Jonathan Chait's book,* The Big Con: The True Story of How Washington Got Hoodwinked and Hijacked by Crackpot Economics, *which will be published on September 12 by Houghton Mifflin.*



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beyond a tiny circle of adherents.

That fateful night, Wanniski and Laffer were laboring with little success to explain the new theory to Cheney. Laffer pulled out a cocktail napkin and drew a parabola-shaped curve on it. The premise of the curve was simple. If the government sets a tax rate of zero, it will receive no revenue. And, if the government sets a tax rate of 100 percent, the government will also receive zero tax revenue, since nobody will have any reason to earn any income. Between these two points—zero taxes and zero revenue, 100 percent taxes and zero revenue—Laffer's curve drew an arc. The arc suggested that at higher levels of taxation, reducing the tax rate would produce more revenue for the government.

At that moment, there were a few points that Cheney might have made in response. First, he could have noted that the Laffer Curve was not, strictly speaking, correct. Yes, a zero tax rate would obviously produce zero revenue, but the assumption that a 100-percent tax rate would also produce zero revenue was, just as obviously, false. Surely Cheney was familiar with communist states such as the Soviet Union, with its 100 percent tax rate. The Soviet revenue scheme may not have represented the cutting edge in economic efficiency, but it nonetheless managed to collect enough revenue to maintain an enormous military, enslave Eastern Europe, fund ambitious projects such as Sputnik, and so on. Second, Cheney could have pointed out that, even if the Laffer Curve was correct in theory, there was no evidence that the U.S. income tax was on the downward slope of the curve—that is, that rates were then high enough that tax cuts would produce higher revenue.

But Cheney did not say either of these things. Perhaps, in retrospect, this was due to something deep in Cheney's character that makes him unusually susceptible to theories or purported data that confirm his own ideological predilections. (You can almost picture Donald Rumsfeld, years later, scrawling a diagram for Cheney on a cocktail napkin showing that only a small number of troops would be needed to occupy Iraq.) In any event, Cheney apparently found the Laffer Curve a revelation, for it presented in a simple, easily digestible form the messianic power of tax cuts.

The significance of the evening was not the conversion of Cheney but the creation of a powerful symbol that could spread the word of supply-side economics. If you try to discuss economic theory with most politicians, their eyes will glaze over. But the Curve explained it all. There in that sloping parabola was the magical promise of that elusive politician's nirvana, a cost-free path to prosperity: lower taxes, higher revenues. It was beautiful, irresistible.

With astonishing speed, the message of the Laffer Curve spread through the ranks of conservatives and Republicans. Wanniski evangelized tirelessly on behalf of this new doctrine, both on the *Journal*'s editorial pages and in person. As an example of the latter, one day in 1976, he wandered by the office of a young representative named Jack Kemp. He asked to talk to Kemp for 15 minutes, but he wound up expounding on the supply-side gospel to the former NFL quarterback for the rest of the day, through dinner, and late into the night. "He took to it like a blotter," Wanniski later recalled. "I was exhausted and ecstatic. I had finally found an elected representative of the people who was as fanatical as I was."

Adherents of supply-side economics tend to describe the spread of their creed in quasi-religious terms. Irving Kristol subsequently wrote in a memoir, "It was Jude [Wanniski] who introduced me to Jack Kemp, a young congressman and a recent convert. It was Jack Kemp who, almost single-handed, converted Ronald Reagan to supply-side economics." The theological language is fitting because supply-side economics is not merely an economic program. It's a totalistic ideology. The core principle is that economic performance hinges almost entirely on how much incentive investors and entrepreneurs have to attain more wealth, and this incentive in turn hinges almost entirely on their tax rate. Therefore, cutting taxes—especially those of the rich, who carry out the decisive entrepreneurial role in the economy—is always a good idea.

But what, you may ask, about deficits, the old Republican bugaboo? Supply-siders argue either that tax cuts will produce enough growth to wipe out deficits or that deficits simply don't matter. When Reagan first adopted supply-side economics, even many Republicans considered it lunacy. ("Voodoo economics," George H. W. Bush famously called it.) Today, though, the core beliefs of the supply-siders are not even subject to question among Republicans. Every major conservative opinion outlet promotes supply-side economics. Since Bush's heresy of acceding to a small tax hike in 1990, deviation from the supply-side creed has become unthinkable for any Republican with national aspirations.

The full capitulation of the old fiscal conservatives was probably best exemplified by Bob Dole, the crusty old Kansan once thought synonymous with the traditional Midwestern conservatism of the GOP. Early on, Dole had openly scorned the supply-siders. "People who advocate only cutting taxes live in a dream world," he said in 1982. "We Republicans have been around awhile. We don't have to march in lockstep with the supply-siders." By the time he had risen high enough in the party to gain its presidential nomination, Dole had no choice but to embrace the Laffer Curve. He chose Jack Kemp, an original supply-side evangelist, as his running mate and made a 15 percent tax cut the centerpiece of his campaign.

George W. Bush's fidelity to tax-cutting runs even deeper. He took as his chief economic adviser Larry Lindsey, a fervent supply-sider whose book, *The Growth Experiment*, defended Reagan's tax cuts. He picked as his running mate yet another original supply-sider in Cheney, who summed up the new consensus by declaring (according to the former treasury secretary, Paul O'Neill), "Reagan proved deficits don't matter." Bush has poured every ounce of his political capital into cutting taxes, having signed four tax cuts during his administration; when fully phased in, they will reduce federal revenues by about $400 billion a year. Bush and his staff repeatedly tout tax cuts as an all-purpose cure. Bush can endorse even the most radical supply-side claims—"the deficit would have been bigger without the tax-relief package," he asserts regularly—without raising eyebrows. So deeply entrenched is the devotion to supply-side theory that, even in the face of large deficits and a protracted war, not a single Republican of any standing has dared broach the possibility of rolling back some of Bush's tax cuts. As Robert Bartley, *The Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page editor, boasted, "Economists still ridicule the Laffer Curve, but policymakers pay it careful heed."

Like most crank doctrines, supply-side economics has at its core a central insight that does have a ring of plausibility. The government can't simply raise tax rates as high as it wants without some adverse consequences. And there have been periods in American history when, nearly any contemporary economist would agree, top tax rates were too high, such as the several



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decades after World War II. And there are justifiable conservative arguments to be made on behalf of reducing tax rates and government spending. But what sets the supply-siders apart from sensible economists is their sheer monomania. You could plausibly argue that, say, Reagan's tax cuts contributed around the margins to the economic growth of the 1980s. But the supply-siders believe that, if it were not for Reagan's tax cuts, the economic malaise of the late '70s would have continued indefinitely. They believe that economic history is a function of tax rates—they insisted that Bill Clinton's upper-bracket tax hike *must* cause a recession (whoops), and they believe that the present economy is a boom not merely enhanced but brought about by the Bush tax cuts.

It doesn't take a great deal of expertise to see how implausible this sort of analysis is. All you need is a cursory bit of history. From 1947 to 1973, the U.S. economy grew at a rate of nearly 4 percent a year—a massive boom, fueling rapid growth in living standards across the board. During most of that period, from 1947 until 1964, the highest tax rate hovered around 91 percent. For the rest of the time, it was still a hefty 70 percent. Yet the economy flourished anyway. None of this is to say that those high tax rates *caused* the postwar boom. On the contrary, the economy probably expanded despite, rather than because of, those high rates. Almost no contemporary economist would endorse jacking up rates that high again. But the point is that, whatever negative effect such high tax rates have, it's relatively minor. Which necessarily means that whatever effects today's tax rates have, they're even *more* minor.

This can be seen with some very simple arithmetic. As just noted, Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy taxpayers in the top bracket had to pay a 91 percent rate. That meant that, if they were contemplating, say, a new investment, they would be able to keep just nine cents of every dollar they earned, a stiff disincentive. When that rate dropped down to 70 percent, our top earner could now keep 30 cents of every new dollar. That more than tripled the profitability of any new dollar—a 233 percent increase, to be exact. That's a hefty incentive boost. In 1981, the top tax rate was cut again to 50 percent. The profit on every new dollar therefore rose from 30 to 50 cents, a 67 percent increase. In 1986, the top rate dropped again, from 50 to 28 percent. The profit on every dollar rose from 50 to 72 cents, a 44 percent increase. Note that the marginal improvement of every new tax cut is less than that of the previous one. But we're still talking about large numbers. Increasing the profitability of a new investment even by 44 percent is nothing to sneeze at.

But then George Bush raised the top rate to 31 percent in 1990. This meant that, instead of taking home 72 cents on every new dollar earned, those in the top bracket had to settle for 69 cents. That's a drop of about 4 percent—peanuts, compared to the scale of previous changes. Yet supply-siders reacted hysterically. *National Review*, to offer one example, noted fearfully that, in the wake of this small tax hike, the dollar had fallen against the yen and the German mark. "It seems," its editors concluded, "that capital is flowing out of the United States to nations where 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need' has lost its allure."

Here is where a bit of historical perspective helps. If such a piddling tax increase could really wreck such havoc on the economy, how is it possible that the economy grew so rapidly with top tax rates of 70 and 91 percent? The answer is, it's not. It's not even close to possible. All this is to say that the supply-siders have taken the germ of a decent point—that marginal tax rates matter—and stretched it, beyond all plausibility, into a monocausal explanation of the world.

Aside from popular articles in places like the *Journal*'s editorial page, two classic tomes defined the tenets of supply-side economics: Wanniski's *The Way the World Works* and George Gilder's 1981 manifesto, *Wealth and Poverty*. Both have had enormous influence, and both capture the feverish grandiosity that is the hallmark of the Laffer Curve acolytes. Here is what makes the rise of supply-side ideology even more baffling. One might expect that a radical ideology that successfully passed itself off as a sophisticated new doctrine would at least have the benefit of smooth, reassuring, intellectual front men, men whose very bearing could attest to the new doctrine's eminent good sense and mainstream bona fides. Yet, if you look at its two most eminent authors, good sense is not the impression you get. Let me put this delicately. No, on second thought, let me put it straightforwardly: They are deranged.

Gilder was not an economist when he wrote *Wealth and Poverty*. Until then, he was known primarily for having written a pair of anti-feminist tracts, and his notoriety derived mainly from his penchant for making comments such as "There is no such thing as a reasonably intelligent feminist." *Wealth and Poverty*, though, launched him as an eminent defender of supply-side economics just as adherents of the new creed had been catapulted into power. Gilder articulated the new philosophy of the Reagan era in admirably straightforward fashion. "To help the poor and middle classes," he wrote, "one must cut the taxes of the rich."

In reflecting the new prestige Republicans wished to see afforded the rich, Gilder defended capitalists as not merely necessary or even heroic but altruistic. "Like gifts, capitalist investments are made without a predetermined return," he wrote. In fact, while capitalists may not be sure of their exact return, they do expect to make more than they put in, which makes an investment unlike a gift in a fairly crucial way. Yet there was enough of an audience for such sentiments that Gilder's book sold more than a million copies. President Reagan handed the book to friends, and advisers such as David Stockman hailed its "Promethean" insight. *Wealth and Poverty*, reported *The New York Times*, "has been embraced by Washington with a warmth not seen since the Kennedys adopted John Kenneth Galbraith."

From the beginning, Gilder betrayed signs of erratic thought, and not merely in his misogyny. In a 1981 interview with *The Washington Post*, he declared, "ESP is important to me. I learned that it absolutely exists. A roommate and I were sharing an apartment, and another man in the building was a psychic. He taught me how to do it." In the mid-'80s, Gilder's career took an abrupt turn. He became fascinated with microprocessors and took time off to learn the physics of the new technology. This led him, by the mid-'90s, to stake out a position as the most wild-eyed of the technology utopians who flourished during that period, and he ended up publishing a newsletter that offered stock tips. Some of his pronouncements were obviously crazy even at the time. These would include his advice to short Microsoft stock in 1997, his claim that Global Crossing (now bankrupt) "will change the world economy," and general techno-giddiness, such as his claim that, because of online learning, within five years "the most deprived ghetto child in the most benighted project will gain educational opportunities exceeding those of today's suburban preppy."

In the fevered stock bubble of the 1990s, though, some of Gilder's prognostications seemed to pan out, at least for a while, and, at its peak, his newsletter



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attracted a subscription base worth $20 million, making him fabulously rich. In 2000, Gilder used some of his lucre to purchase the *American Spectator*, a monthly conservative magazine best known for investigating the details of President Clinton's personal indiscretions, both real and imagined. Gilder turned the *Spectator* into a shrine to Gilderism, a fusion of supply-side utopianism and techno-utopianism. He installed his cousin as editor and ran both a lengthy excerpt as well as a favorable review of his own book.

The crowning touch of Gilder's ownership was a lengthy interview with himself in the June 2001 issue. Among other musings on display were Gilder's familiar ruminations on feminism: "Christie Whitman is an upper-class American woman ... almost none of them have any comprehension of the environment. Almost all of them are averse to science and technology and baffled by it." His financial success seemed to have propelled Gilder to even greater heights of hubris, his Promethean insights greeted by his employees with awed deference:

> TAS: In the late 1970s and early '80s, you led the intellectual debate on sexual issues from the conservative side. In the 1980s your book *Wealth and Poverty* transformed the way people thought about capitalism. And then you wandered off to study transistors. Why did you do that?
> Gilder: I thought I had won those debates. Whenever I actively debated anybody, they didn't have any interesting arguments anymore, so I thought I should learn something I didn't know about.

In presenting the interview with their boss, the *Spectator*'s editors promised: "An equally wide-ranging talk with George will be an annual event." Alas, it never recurred. As the tech bubble burst, Gilder and his investors found their wealth spiraling downward. Despite Gilder's frantic reassurances—"Your current qualms will seem insignificant," he promised in late 2000—his subscribers deserted him. In 2002, he confessed to *Wired* magazine that he was broke and had a lien against his home. "Most subscribers came in at the top of the market," Gilder later explained, "So the modal experience of the Gilder Technology Newsletter subscriber was to lose virtually all of his money. That stigma has been very hard to overcome."

Nonetheless, Gilder soldiers on. Today, he champions the theory of intelligent design. Once again, he can see the truth that has eluded all the so-called experts. Who could have foreseen such a tragic downfall? Actually, there was one man visionary enough to presage Gilder's fate: Gilder himself. In *Wealth and Poverty*, one of Gilder's arguments for more sympathetic treatment of the rich held that "the vast majority of America's fortunes are dissipated within two generations. ... In a partial sense, a rich man resembles a gambler betting against the house." This is a terribly inapt description of the American economy. (It is the rare homeless shelter that caters to descendants of the Rockefeller or Morgan family fortunes.) But it turned out to be a precise description of Gilder's own fortune. Wealth and poverty, indeed.

As influential as Gilder and his book were, they were not nearly as influential in legitimating supply-side theory as Wanniski or his book. This isn't terribly reassuring, though, because Wanniski (who died in 2005) made Gilder look like the model of sobriety. The literary and intellectual style of *The Way the World Works* is immediately familiar to anybody who has ever sorted submissions at a political magazine. It is the manifesto of the misunderstood autodidact—an essay purporting to have interpreted history in a completely novel and completely correct way, or to have discovered the key to eternal prosperity and world peace, or some equally sweeping claim. *The Way the World Works* fits precisely into this category, except that, rather than being scrawled longhand on sheaves of notebook paper and mass-mailed to journalists, it was underwritten by the American Enterprise Institute, has been published in four editions, and features introductions attesting to its genius from such luminaries as Bartley and the columnist and ubiquitous pundit Robert Novak.

For supply-side evangelists, there is almost nothing that their theory cannot explain. For instance, in his book, Wanniski uses the Laffer Curve as a model for all of human development, beginning with young babies: "Even the infant learns to both act and think on the margin when small changes in behavior result in identifiable 'price changes.'" Parents, too, must abide by the Curve:

> The parent who does not understand that there are two tax rates that yield the same revenue is a poor political leader in the family unit, and should not be surprised if the prohibitively taxed infant rebels in one way or another—becoming an incorrigible terror (revolutionary) or withdrawing into himself (the only form of emigration open to a child).

This thought produces a footnote: "The wise ruler will never surround his adversaries with 'no-nos.'" Wanniski then runs through a number of historical rulers wise and unwise, concluding with his observation that "Kennedy's determination to box in Cuba, which included plans to assassinate Fidel Castro, left Castro no avenue but the assassination of Kennedy."

Apparently, nothing in human history defies Wanniski's attempts to involve the Laffer Curve. He goes on to write: "When Hitler came to power in 1933, fascinated with Mussolini's syndicalist style, he—like Roosevelt—left tax rates where he found them." Can you see where this is going? Yes: "Although he left the explicit tax rates high, [Germany] did chip away at the domestic and international wedges. The economy expanded, but in so distorted a fashion that it compressed the tension between agriculture and industry into an explosive problem that Hitler sought to solve through *Lebensraum*, or conquest [sic]." You, dear reader, may have thought that Nazi ideology led to the invasion of Poland, but, thanks to Wanniski, you can see that the underlying cause turns out to have been high taxes. (It is amazing that Bill Clinton's tax hike did not lead him to invade Canada.)

Republicans did not find these obvious signs of wingnuttery troubling. Indeed, Wanniski's book hastened his astonishingly rapid rise. Five years before he wrote his book, Wanniski knew nothing about economics. Within a few years, he had formulated a new creed and sold it to a series of powerful opinion leaders and politicians. By 1977, the Republican National Committee formally called for an across-the-board tax cut modeled on the one proposed by Wanniski's closest disciple, Kemp. The next year, Congress enacted a capital gains tax cut that he lobbied for in the halls of the Capitol and championed in the *Journal*'s columns.

Two years after the publication of his book, Wanniski found himself advising Ronald Reagan, who ran for president on ideas Wanniski had devised. But, in time, the same qualities that made him such an effective evangelist for supply-side economics—his gregariousness, his naïveté, his absolute faith in his own correctness, and his ability to persuade others of the same—did him in. Wanniski gave an interview in 1980 about the battle for Reagan's mind among his advisers, all but openly saying that the can-


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didate was a creature of his staff. This brought about his quick expulsion from the inner circle. In 1995, fearing that the supply-side agenda was stagnating, Wanniski came up with the idea of persuading Steve Forbes, the millionaire publisher and Laffer Curve devotee, to run for president. After Wanniski lashed out at the Christian Coalition strategist Ralph Reed, though, he became a liability to the campaign he had created and was shut out. The next year, after the GOP nominee Bob Dole named his acolyte Jack Kemp to share his ticket, Wanniski again won a place of influence.

It was around this time that Wanniski's nuttiness began manifesting itself in ways that even conservatives could recognize. Wanniski began meeting with and defending Louis Farrakhan, the head of the Nation of Islam, explaining, "I expressed my belief that Jewish leaders fear he could lead the black electorate away from the Democratic Party and into opposition of support for Israel." And Farrakhan is far from the only unsavory character Wanniski embraced. He likened Slobodan Milošević to Abraham Lincoln. He met with the lunatic conspiracy theorist and convicted felon Lyndon LaRouche and hired a number of his followers at his economic consulting firm. ("[T]hey're not trained in demand-model economics," he explained to *BusinessWeek* with undeniable logic.) And Wanniski championed Saddam Hussein, even to the point of denying that the late Iraqi dictator had ever used chemical weapons against the Kurds. ("There is no possibility that Saddam gassed his own people," he wrote.)

Such statements, combined with his erratic behavior, eventually made Wanniski an outcast within the GOP. His expulsion from the party's good graces was consecrated, in a sense, by a series of short editorial items in the conservative *Weekly Standard* in the mid-'90s, ridiculing his nutty views on Farrakhan and Iraq. But, while Wanniski himself is remembered as a nut by most conservatives, his primary doctrine has lost none of its influence. The *Standard* continues to publish editorials saying such things as "the supply-side Laffer Curve has worked." So Wanniski is now viewed as a nut on all matters save the very thing that is the font from which all his nuttiness springs. His personal influence has never been lower, but his ideological influence has never been greater. "It is no exaggeration to say that the recent history of the United States would have been far different were it not for Jude Wanniski," wrote Novak. The scary thing is that he's right.

In February 2006, the conservative journal *Policy Review* published an essay that was shockingly heretical, though perhaps unintentionally so. In it, Carles Boix of the University of Chicago argued that there is a link between democracy and economic equality:

> In an unequal society, the majority resents its diminished status. It harbors the expectation of employing elections to drastically overturn its condition. In turn, the wealthy minority fears the outcome that may follow from free elections and the assertion of majority rule. As a result, it resorts to authoritarian institutions to guarantee its social and economic advantage.

Of the many taboos that prevail among conservatives, the one forbidding any serious discussion of inequality is perhaps the strictest. Any forthright examination of this topic will lead one quickly to the realization that American society has been spreading apart rapidly for three decades and that Republican economic policies have without a doubt contributed mightily to this gulf. So conservatives usually ignore the subject of inequality, except perhaps to minimize its scale or importance.

Why, then, did *Policy Review*, which is published by the staunchly conservative Hoover Institution, open its pages to such apostasy? Well, it didn't intend to. Boix's essay (which was brilliant and widely discussed) concerned the inculcation of democracy abroad and did not deal directly with the United States. And the circumstances Boix envisioned—mainly, developing countries attempting a transition to democracy—are different from those in an advanced democracy. Americans, fortunately, do not have to worry about kleptocrats, political violence, and massive vote fraud.

But, while Boix's theory may be less applicable to the United States than it is to the Third World, it is still somewhat true. Indeed, this theory offers an uncannily precise description of what has happened in American politics over the last 30 years. The business lobbyists have turned the Republican Party into a kind of machine dedicated unwaveringly to protecting and expanding the wealth of the very rich. As it has pursued this goal ever more single-mindedly, the right has by necessity grown ever more hostile to majoritarian decision-making for the obvious reason that it's hard to enlist the public behind an agenda designed to benefit a tiny minority. The old ways of conducting politics have broken down in the face of this onslaught. The mores of the old Washington establishment—the assumption of some basic intellectual goodwill on both sides, the focus on character over substance, the belief in compromise—all developed during an era when there were few ideological differences between the parties. The old ways may have done a decent job of safeguarding the national interest when the great moderate consensus prevailed, but they have proven unequal to the challenge of a more ideological time.

All this has happened at the same time as a massive increase in income inequality, which is exactly what Boix's theory would predict. In the same essay, Boix marvels at the fortunes amassed by autocratic ruling elites throughout history:

> Rulers such as the Bourbons, the Tudors, or the Sauds seize an important part of their subjects' assets. For example, at the death of Augustus (14 a.d.), the top 1/10,000 of the Roman Empire's households received 1 percent of all income. In Mughal India around 1600 a.d., the top 1/10,000th received 5 percent of all income.

Presumably, readers looking at these numbers are supposed to gape in astonishment at the sheer inequity of those autocratic regimes. But the numbers are less astonishing when you compare them to those in the contemporary United States, which Boix does not. As of 2004, the top one-ten-thousandth of Americans earned over 3 percent of the national income—a somewhat smaller share than that earned by the Mughal elite but several times higher than that enjoyed by the wealthiest Romans.

Meanwhile, the gap between Americans and Mughals is closing rapidly. Since the late '70s, the share of national income going to the top 1 percent has doubled. The share of the top 0.1 percent has tripled, and the share of the top 0.01 percent has quadrupled. This gulf was widened precisely at the same time that the right, growing ever more plutocratic and suspicious of popular demands, was battering away at the culture of American democracy. Many people have looked at the depredations of the Bush era—the bizarre cult of personality, the anti-intellectual demagoguery, the incessant flouting of norms, the prostrate media—as the product of the president's character, or Karl Rove's machinations. But it is, in the main, the consequence of a cult-like fringe taking control of a political party and using it to wage class warfare on behalf of a tiny minority. ◆



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## Stanley Kauffmann on Films

# GENIUSES: SOME NOTES

THEY MIGHT HAVE SMILED. Averse as they were to plot mechanics in their work, they might have been amused at the blatant coincidence of their deaths on the same day. Or they might have been amused at those who believe it was planned by a cosmic trickster. In any case, July 30, 2007 is now a signal date in film history. Michelangelo Antonioni was ninety-four, Ingmar Bergman was eighty-nine.

Their work now moves into a different light. Almost all the art that is valuable to us is encased in history: it comes to us from the past, recent or remote. These two men, however, were contemporaries of ours: I even knew one of them a bit. Still, in a doubtlessly romantic view, any prosy connections between them and the present were jarring. In 1976, Bergman had severe publicized troubles with the Swedish government about taxes. In 1984, newspapers carried a photo of Antonioni standing guard with other directors at the coffin of an esteemed political figure. It was a faint shock to see the creators of the art that is part of my secrets involved in these daily doings.

But now their art moves into history. In Godard's *Breathless* the matter is well put. A novelist is asked his ambition. He says: "To become immortal and then to die." Exactly so here, twice.

The proximate deaths of Antonioni and Bergman prompt something that was rare during their lives: comparison with each other. One way to do this job is to compare their views of the theater and the relation of those views to their films.

No obituary of Bergman that I have seen has mentioned his film of *The Magic Flute*. Such a film would quite obviously have been impossible for Antonioni. Not only is *The Magic Flute* the best film ever made of an opera—modest distinction though that is—but it marries beautifully the main currents of Bergman's life. His theater career was even more prolific than his film work. (There are several books solely about his theater productions.) Bergman, in the Mozart piece, seemed to want to dramatize his twofold being. The opera is handled with innumerable theatrical and cinematic delicacies, and we are also taken backstage from time to time into the lives of the people who are making the marvel. Bergman seems to be fusing his several masteries before our eyes.

ANTHONY RUSSO

*MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI*

*INGMAR BERGMAN*

Here the use of those masteries is explicit, but it is present in all his work. The second time I saw *Fanny and Alexander* I was especially wonderstruck by the way he handled his actors' movement—not camera movement, at which he was a wizard, but the choreographing of actors as if they were on stage. His excellence with actors has a history. For many years he worked with a group of actors at various theaters during the season, then used some of them in films made during the summer. He and they knew one another in coded but clear ways. In the very first sequence of *Scenes From a Marriage*, see how Erland Josephson and Liv Ullmann move together into the screenplay like experienced dance partners into a *pas de deux*.

Antonioni, after some theater work during his university days, had small interest in the field. He did some theater directing, including the Italian premiere of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, but when I asked him once if he was interested in more theater work, he shook his head. "No," he said. "Always the same shot."

This complete immersion in cinema led him to achievements that were possible only in cinema. Think of Jeanne Moreau's long walk through the streets of Milan in *La Notte*, in which virtually nothing extraordinary happens but which, sheerly through selection and silence and concentration, becomes a kind of melancholy poem about inner loneliness in the modern world. Think of the long last sequence of *Eclipse*, which is only a series of street scenes in Rome with none of the actors, scenes that might have been places of rendezvous for the two lovers we have come to know but are now peopled only by passers-by. Subtly, we face the eventual passing of the lovers' affair, along with the shaky nature of truths about which we are hotly convinced at many moments in our lives. Neither of these two sequences, or plentiful others in Antonioni's work, would have been likely in Bergman.

Another means of comparison is in their differing views of time, views that are related to the theater. Excepting the Bergman films that were originally made for television and later condensed for the large screen, works thus born in different concepts of time, most of his pictures are tight, less than ninety minutes. Never is there any sense of imposed pace: only the theater's ethic that every moment must be utilized in character or dramatic development.

Antonioni, with no such imperative, wanted to employ time, real elapsed time, as a character, as a power that film gave him. The scene in *L'Avventura* in which



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two lovers kiss near the railway, really kiss for the first time, could conventionally have been condensed to half its length. Antonioni wanted us to breathe through the experience, to take something like the number of breaths that the lovers are taking in that scene (as they are in fact altering their lives), to feel its impact almost physically.

What fundamentally links Antonioni and Bergman, despite their differences, is a common theme: the question of God. Do we live in a godless universe? If this is so, how do we go about living? How do we make our choices? A generalization about these two artists is possible. For Bergman, the son of a clergyman who in a sense harassed him all his life, the question pressed constantly. For Antonioni, the question was answered early on, thoroughly, finally. Most of his films are about the result of this vacancy—the murkiness of compass points.

Bergman confronts the basic question intensely in a trilogy. Here are the titles, with his comments: "*Through a Glass Darkly*—certainty achieved. *The Communicants*—certainty unmasked. *The Silence*—God's silence—the negative impression." The centerpiece, known in America as *Winter Light*, is a drama about a clergyman whose faith is shaken but who is, so to speak, trapped in his religious office and continues in it doggedly, yet almost gratefully. Bergman once said of the film, "Everything became stations [of the cross] on the road for the priest."

Antonioni never deals extensively with religion in his films. (Elsewhere, in interviews and articles, he was explicit.) But his view of it underlies very much of his work, his sense that religion is a function of the past, now outworn. Look, for instance, at the stock-exchange scene in *Eclipse*. The building was originally an imperial basilica that had been converted into a Catholic church and then converted again into the Borsa. William Arrowsmith says: "Everything . . . about the stock exchange in Antonioni's film tells us that the director is conscious of its religious nature." Its religious devolution, one might say.

Thus the past clings, or tries to cling, to us. But what of the present, asks Antonioni, even the future? Look at the last scene of *L'Avventura*. Sandro is a middle-aged man, successful, self-despising, who persuades a young woman, Claudia, to become his lover. She hesitates because his previous lover was a friend of hers who disappeared, possibly a suicide, only three days earlier. At last Claudia, not untroubled, consents. A day or so later she and Sandro stop in a luxe hotel. She is sleepy; he goes downstairs. In the early morning she goes to look for him and discovers him with a tart. Sobbing, she runs outside to a terrace, stands there against the railing. (In one shot a ruined church is in the background.) Surely she is not only shaken by his action but is very possibly linking it with her own action in becoming his lover so soon after her friend was gone. Sandro comes out behind her slowly and sits on a bench, his back toward her. She turns, approaches him. She sees that he is weeping, surely facing the void in himself. After a moment she puts a hand gently on the back of his head, and the film ends.

Her gesture is for me a terrifying moment. Claudia is not forgiving him: she doesn't have or want that power. She is acknowledging that Sandro, like her, is something of a victim—stranded in a hollow universe, left with only inutile shards of order. They are, in a profound sense, alone.

In 1979 Roland Barthes sent an open letter to Antonioni apropos of a retrospective of the director's work in Bologna. In my view the letter can be read as also addressed to Bergman. Barthes called Antonioni "not only in the realm of cinema—one of the artists of our time." He cited "the specters of modern subjectivity" that plague artists these days: "ideological lassitude, bad social conscience, the attraction to and distaste left by facile art, the trepidation of responsibility, and the incessant scruple that tears the artist apart, between solitude and gregariousness." He closed:

> It is therefore necessary that you take full advantage of this peaceful, harmonious moment in which an entire assemblage comes to recognize, admire, and love your work. Because tomorrow the hard work begins again.

As it did, addressed by both Antonioni and Bergman, not only with their gifts but with their generally unremarked courage. What legacies they leave. Countless beneficiaries are yet to come.

*Personal notes.* I had an appointment to meet Bergman in Stockholm in the summer of 1964, but when I arrived, a colleague of his presented me with the director's apologies and the excuse that he had gone to his island to write a screenplay. I saw some other interesting film people in Stockholm; still I was, of course, disappointed. Two years later the film appeared for which—at least I told myself—Bergman had abandoned me. It was *Persona*, a sublime masterwork, so I forgave him.

I met and dined with Antonioni several times, in Rome and Venice and New York. From a cluster of Antonioni vignettes, here are two.

In 1966 I interviewed him for an hour and a half on PBS. Two years earlier in Rome he had promised to appear on television with me when he was next in New York—I was busy on the PBS station in those days—and when he arrived for the American premiere of *Blowup*, he kept his word. At the time he understood English but wasn't confident about speaking it; so a translator was there for his replies to my questions. After the taping he and I went back to the dressing room where we had been made up before the show. He picked up a towel, wiped his face, and was dismayed by the big red-brown smear. "Good heavens," he said. I laughed at the perfectly enunciated phrase in English coming from someone who had just needed ninety minutes of translation. He laughed, too, a little.

I saw him last in New York in 1992. He had come for the opening of a retrospective of his work despite the fact that in 1985 he had suffered a stroke that paralyzed his whole right side and left him speechless. (Yet he had continued, with assistants, to work.) When I arrived at the theater, I saw him in the lobby, with two or three people but not really listening to them. They went, and I walked up to him. His face warmed. He put out his left hand, and I grasped it in both of my hands. He made some sounds in his throat. After a moment, which was both long and short, I left. ◆

## We Can't Say Those Things Anymore

You have the instincts of a roadhouse hen
hypnotized by a toothpick.
How's about another
hogshead from the pantry?
She's not Helen, after all.
I blew it—that's what the
glassblower said,
speaking freely
out of the part of him
that was an idiot.
That ought to get their goat.
Too bad about the goat.
We'll get it right next time.

**LEE UPTON**



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## David Hajdu on Music

# STOLEN MOMENTS

Near the end of 1956, two young jazz singers made their first albums: *Abbey Lincoln's Affair . . . A Story of a Girl in Love*, released by Liberty Records, a quality-conscious shoestring operation, and *Meet Mark Murphy*, issued by Decca, then a major jazz-pop label. Lincoln was twenty-six and black and a woman, Murphy twenty-four and white and a man, and both had talent and looks. For half a century, they followed separate and circuitous but roughly parallel career paths. Both started out singing in traditional modes, soon developed quirky original styles, indulged their inclinations to extremes, pushed the tolerance of the general public, moved out of Manhattan (Lincoln to California, Murphy to Europe), and bought time by doing some acting and teaching; and then both returned to the New York jazz scene and made a great deal of mature, sophisticated music.

***ABBEY SINGS ABBEY***
Abbey Lincoln

***LOVE IS WHAT STAYS***
Mark Murphy

Now in their seventies, Lincoln and Murphy have both survived bouts of grave illness and this year released new CDs on the Verve label: Lincoln's *Abbey Sings Abbey* and Murphy's *Love Is What Stays*. Both of the albums are works about aging—or more precisely, about having grown old and looked death in the face; and they stand as companionable testaments to jazz's capacity to accommodate ideas all too rare in mainstream music, primary among them the notion that the end of life is a part of life worth the attention, the respect, and even the affection of serious artists and their audiences.

It is startling to find singers taking up the themes of old age and mortality, and even more surprising to find the artists treating these subjects honestly and intelligently, with no pretense of enduring youth nor cheap sentiment—especially at this time of year, the season of glossy, overdone, feel-good summer concert tours and music festivals. To watch Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend parading under the good-because-it's-bad name of the once young and scary Who, or Mick Jagger prancing about with his beknighted sixty-four-year-old tongue stuck out, is to submit to a spectacular delusion of the pop-music world, wherein old age exists not as a natural phase in the cycle of life and death, but as a state of freakish artificial youth generated to sustain the feedback loop of narcissism spinning from the stage through the stands and back again.

Pop culture abhors the old as a matter of good business. After all, as we age we do tend to grow set in our ways of thinking and feeling—and therefore in our ways of buying. We are not great consumers anymore, and one reason we buy less is that we do less. (I should probably note here, in full mortal disclosure, that my own age is fifty-two.) The old may still have active lives, as the commercials never fail to remind us; but with the years, more and more of the activity becomes of the mind. This fact may serve more than anything else to alienate the old from the rest of America. To spend more time thinking than doing is one of the few things held in greater suspicion than to spend time not spending. Thus *Abbey Sings Abbey* and *Love Is What Stays*, both of which are sedate and pensive works, speak so eloquently in the milieu of age that they sound radical—more genuinely radical, certainly, than the pseudo-adolescent posturing of Daltrey and Townshend.

Jazz has long been a music hospitable to aging, because it requires technical mastery of complex forms, it prizes individuality of expression, and it calls upon musicians to come to the bandstand with ideas worth expressing. Experience helps considerably in all these challenges—experience in living as much as in playing or singing. Several years ago I discussed some of these issues with Lena Horne, when she was recording her first album in more than a decade—her own statement on aging and mortality, which she did in the form of a musical message to departed loved ones, titled *We'll Be Together Again*. I asked her why she had let herself lie fallow for so long, and why she decided to dig back into work in her late seventies. "I was going through the motions. I thought that being a nightclub singer was a dumb thing to be," she said of the period when she had last performed and chose to hang up her sequins. And what happened during her years of self-imposed exile on Manhattan's Upper East Side? "I took long walks around the park, and I stayed at home by myself and read books," she said. "I learned how dumb I really was. Now, *that's* what I call getting smart."

Abbey Lincoln, who has acknowledged Horne as an important influence, has similarly cited uncertainty as a strength acquired late in her career. After a hypnotic, languorous performance at the Blue Note in New York a few years ago, she spent a bit of time with fans and reporters outside her dressing room, and someone asked her what she thought the young Abbey Lincoln would have made of the woman who had just performed. Lincoln said her youthful self "wouldn't understand her." Beaming, she added, "*I* don't understand her." Indeed, a kind of cryptic wisdom, an odd quality of mature naïveté, has given much of Lincoln's late-life music its unusual power.

The young Abbey Lincoln had been doing something more conventional, though doing it well, and the conventions of her time and place were sufficiently daunting. While the liturgy of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame teaches us that old-fashioned popular music was so atrocious in the mid-1950s that Elvis had to come forth for pop's salvation, 1956 and 1957—the years of Presley's sensational arrival and the explosion of rock and roll—were in fact a time of extraordinary achievement in Tin Pan Alley–style vocal music. Frank Sinatra, at the peak of his interpretive powers, released *Songs for Swingin' Lovers* and *Close to You and More*, contrasting gems of romantic bravura and sweet intimacy. Ella Fitzgerald began recording her now legendary Songbook series of records (just now being re-issued) devoted to the canonical popular songwriters, releasing three double-album sets covering the works of Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, and Duke Ellington within two years, with time left for an album's worth of duets with Louis Armstrong. Billie Holiday gave her valedictory performance at Carnegie Hall, accompanied by a narrator reading excerpts from her (largely ghostwritten) memoir, *Lady Sings the Blues*. Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, the dazzling exemplars of jazz "vocalese," recorded their debut LP, *Sing a Song of Basie*. And singers such as Sarah Vaughan, Johnny Hartman, Carmen McRae, and Kay Starr were all doing some of the best work of their lives. The truth is, jazz-oriented popular music reached a creative peak at the time of rock's emergence. Adult pop had become an art music, better suited to listening and contemplation than to dancing and necking, a fact that no doubt contributed to its abandonment by teenagers. Rock and rollers, the victors



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in the end, have written the other side's triumphs out of history.

Such was the musical environment that Abbey Lincoln and Mark Murphy dared to enter fifty-one years ago, and their first albums showed their eagerness to prove themselves, if not to distinguish themselves, by the prevailing standards. *Abbey Lincoln's Affair* and its follow-up, *That's Him*, are of a piece: aggressive efforts to exploit Lincoln's beauty by packaging her as a doe-eyed, man-hungry sexpot. The jacket of the first album showed Lincoln lying on her back, waiting, laid out as if she were hanging upside down, and the songs on both albums were compatible messages of submission or paeans to male gratification: "Warm Valley" (a lyric version of the programmatic instrumental that Duke Ellington composed to suggest a woman's vagina), "When a Woman Loves a Man" (in which the singer is a fool in the "one-sided game" of romance), and other pieces such as "I Must Have That Man," "Strong Man," and "Don't Explain." Lincoln played the role, but she could not pull it off. There was too much bite and muscle in her singing for her to sound persuasively compliant and dim.

Like Murphy in his debut recordings and countless other musicians in their early work, Lincoln sounded more like her role models—here Billie Holiday, there Lena Horne or Dinah Washington—than herself. For Murphy, the main influence was Sinatra, followed by Nat Cole and Sammy Davis Jr. Like many young singers, too, both Lincoln and Murphy fixed on technique to show off their vocal equipment and to establish their right to the big time, rather than employing it in the service of personal expression, as they would learn to do in a few years. Both initially focused on tonal production, making full, round notes and sustaining them over two or three bars at a time for all to behold. And both would soon leave the making of pretty sounds to Jo Stafford and Vic Damone, and shift their attention to lyrical content. In the phrase of another fine singer, Barbara Lea, they learned "not to be afraid to sound bad"—that is, not to sacrifice deeper meaning for surface beauty.

It helped Lincoln greatly to work with lyrics meaningful to her, as she began to do in 1959 with her album for the jazz label Riverside, *Abbey Is Blue*, which included Kurt Weill and Langston Hughes's "Lonely House," several tunes by the under-appreciated Oscar Brown Jr., and, significantly, the first of her own original compositions committed to record, a piercing blues called "Let Up." In the 1960s, Lincoln was devoted to civil rights and taken up with issues of African American identity. She worked closely with the gracefully probative drummer and composer Max Roach, who married Lincoln, later parted from her, and last month ventured before her into death. Under Roach's direction, Lincoln sang and co-composed (with Roach and Oscar Brown Jr.) parts of a manifesto of black pride and defiance, a rhythmically multilayered musical collage for LP titled *We Insist: Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite*. Her enthusiasm for music waned in sync with the jazz audience's diminishing appetite for her politicking, and Lincoln relocated to Los Angeles, where she made a living acting, primarily for television, and teaching drama at California State Northridge. Although she made a few recordings in the 1970s and 1980s, most of them under patrons in Rome and Oslo and Tokyo, Lincoln did not commit herself fully to music again until the 1990s, when her career as a singer and songwriter finally came into bloom. Lincoln was a woman in her sixties, essentially starting over.

Murphy, in the 1960s, grew progressively committed to the hipster bebop that Lincoln left behind. For a white singer at the time, this was at once a mark of respect for African American musical culture and a jarring sign of outdatedness. Murphy, whose early promise as a jazz-pop crossover star was such that producer Milt Gabler predicted that he would "scare Frank Sinatra," abandoned any hope of mainstream success; his increasingly loopy scat solos and hepcat vibe scared the audience. Murphy moved to London, where he concentrated on acting for BBC television until the mid-1970s, when he returned to America and began performing and recording vocal music more deeply committed to bop, more retro, and more kooky than ever. Decades removed from the Beat era, Murphy no longer seemed a few years behind the times; he began to come across as fully a classicist, an artist committed to a sensibility born of another time but justifiable as more than kitsch or nostalgia.

Lincoln and Murphy have been revered elders of jazz singing for more than a decade now. Lincoln, in nearly a dozen albums as a leader, has produced a late-life body of strange and delightful singsongy original compositions, freewheeling ruminations on her life, which she has performed with a sure, unaffected voice indifferent to nicety. Murphy, a true improviser with a sense of abandon, a strength of personality, and a melodic inventiveness rare in vocal jazz these days, has produced nearly twice as many CDs as Lincoln—all of them wildly ambitious, some of them just wild. Being an improviser, he comes off best in live performance, and his frequent shows in Manhattan jazz clubs are intoxicatingly, almost frighteningly unpredictable. I would rather watch Murphy sing, on the good chance of getting caught in the slipstream of one of his spacey vocal rides, than see nearly any of the hundreds of performers who call themselves jazz singers because they learned "How High the Moon." Murphy knows how high the moon is, and the way there, and he's taking passengers.

Their new CDs find both Lincoln and Murphy in the ripest stages of their creative maturity. On *Abbey Sings Abbey*, Lincoln revisits many of the best original songs she recorded over the past decade, including "Bird Alone," "Throw It Away," "The Merry Dancer," and "Should've Been." These familiar pieces sound new here in part because Lincoln's producers and musicians have provided a new setting: in place of jazz veterans such as Hank Jones and Charlie Haden on traditional jazz instruments, the group here is composed of genre-crossing players such as Larry Campbell and Scott Colley, who accompany Lincoln on acoustic guitar, pedal steel guitar, mandolin, accordion, and such. The feeling of the record is earthy, of course, and warm and unhurried. The more significant change is Lincoln's singing, because her voice is nearly shot, ravaged by age and illness—but she uses all the liabilities of her vocal equipment as assets, croaking and cutting notes short, taking in breaths, almost moaning, with her head high, shoulders back, and stomach out. This is a record by a woman who is not only unafraid to sound bad but proud of it, and it is beautiful to hear.

On *Love Is What Stays*, Murphy is concerned mainly with departing. Nearly all the songs are reflections on loss—"Too Late Now," "Did I Ever Really Live," "What If" (the Coldplay song, done seriously and well), "Stolen Moments" (the Oliver Nelson instrumental with Murphy's lyrics, a signature tune of his), and nine more in their spirit. Murphy's voice is throaty and dark-hued but limber, and he sounds spontaneous, as always. He seems not to be singing the lyrics but thinking the words, and his thought has an unexpected quality of contentment. He gives us a take on loss—on death, really—without anguish or self-pity. If, as James Wood has remarked, reading literature like Saul Bellow's is "a special way of being alive," hearing music such as *Love Is What Stays* is to share in a special way of dying. ◆



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Sherwin B. Nuland

# THE GLITZ CURE

**WHEN ILLNESS GOES PUBLIC: CELEBRITY PATIENTS AND HOW WE LOOK AT MEDICINE**
By Barron H. Lerner
(Johns Hopkins University Press, 323 pp., $25)

If there was a single theme that united the various forms of social unrest characterizing the late 1960s, it surely was the demand for individual self-determination. If the placid decade preceding those turbulent years concealed a growing discontent with the long heritage of a paternalistic and accepting society, no one seems to have noticed. The sudden demands for change required the coming of age of a new generation, its members literally and figuratively shouting out their antagonism at established indifference to inequities no longer to be tolerated, even if it took violent struggle (or so some of them insisted) to bring about the necessary transformations. Like revolutionaries of every past era, the young radicals were intent on loosing themselves from norms that they believed to be inhibiting the free expression of their true selves.

Plenty of elders responded with alarm and even disdain, and supported attempts to quash the nascent movement, sometimes with tactics as aggressive as those used by the radicalized youths themselves. But others listened to their message and thought deeply about it, perhaps because some among them had long been dissatisfied with certain social shortcomings and were suddenly finding themselves emboldened to speak out and take action. Still others so motivated may simply have been energized by the process that was given the name "consciousness-raising." Being made consciously aware for the first time that certain of the ways in which society functioned were inherently unfair, plenty of well-meaning people found themselves puzzled over why they had never confronted or even considered the contentious issues that their children were rudely bringing to their attention.

It took plenty of loud urging, mass protests, and sometimes disorderly agitation by the radicalized activists to shift the center. But the center did shift. The civil rights movement, the women's movement, the gay liberation movement—all owe a great deal to the social and intellectual explosiveness of the 1960s. Though the men and women most affected by the long-standing injustices were also the most active, others joined in. Slowly at first—and in many ways too slowly, even today—important changes began to take place; and, though much remains to be done, far more has been accomplished than might have been predicted at the time, by social conservatives or by outright opponents of the needed reforms.

There was one area in which the victims of the inequities consisted not only of certain large segments of society, but, in fact, of everyone. This area was medicine. Since its beginnings some two and a half millennia ago, Western medicine—which would grow into the scientific medicine of the past few centuries—had been characterized by a relationship between doctor and patient that might be called beneficent paternalism, in which the physician determined what was best for the patient, who was expected to comply with all recommendations. It was understood that such decisions were to be made with only the interests of the patient in mind, and were to follow principles of deontology, or the obligation to do the right and moral thing. These obligations were most famously spelled out in declarations such as the Oath of Hippocrates and the Prayer of Maimonides, but they appear as well in many codes of ethics, ancient and modern. Underlying all of this was the unstated compact by which all stakeholders were joined, namely that everyone tacitly assented to the unwritten proposition that doctors knew what they were doing.

None of this was ever overtly questioned, either by the medical profession or by the laity. Despite a low-grade level of chronic grumbling on both sides—and occasionally having attention called to certain inadequacies, through the writings and comments of leaders of medicine—all agreed to agree that the system worked well, to the benefit of patients, doctors, and the general welfare. Enter the 1960s and the self-determination movement. For the first time in their long history of authority, the leaders of medicine were being asked—or more precisely, told—to re-evaluate their basic premise of authority, their presumption of effectiveness, and even their benevolence. The same quality of discontent with long-established tradition that was being brought to bear on racial and sexual inequality exploded in the midst of the serene therapeutic companionship that formed the image of ideal medical care.

But unlike the other arenas in which change was being demanded, the field of medicine was in itself already changing rapidly, in ways that magnified the need for new models of functioning and added urgency to it. An abundance of remarkable discoveries were pouring out of American laboratories in particular, but also from certain other scientifically advanced nations, and these discoveries were revolutionizing diagnosis and therapy. The new knowledge and technologies brought not only new understanding, but also new problems. Unanticipated complexities were raining down upon the process of clinical decision-making. Choices were wider and much harder to make than they had been in the past, and not infrequently they involved the moral and spiritual values not only of the patient but of the doctor as well, and even of the entire fabric of society. This was especially true in issues arising around terminal illness, in which quality of life, definitions of death, and the very uses of certain of the innovations were increasingly coming under scrutiny.

The greatest of the advances bringing the discoveries of twentieth-century science to the bedside had been the introduction of antibiotics, after penicillin came into general use during the final phases of World War II. But matters really went into high gear in the 1960s, with the rapid development of university medical centers, the massive growth of the pharmaceutical industry, and the availability of huge governmental grants for biomedical research. It was this triumvirate of university laboratories and clinics, industry-sponsored research, and federal involvement that led to the present happy situation in which blizzards of new discoveries reach swift usefulness in the care of the sick, and can be evaluated by ever-improving modern statistical methodologies. Not surprisingly, the appearance of the notion of a patient's right to make informed decisions about the course of his or her own care served as a spur

ANTHONY RUSSO



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to achievement, as individuals, advocacy groups, and the knowledgeable public began to make demands not only on their doctors and the profession as a whole, but also on government to support research and clinical applications.

All of this, as I say, began concomitantly with the rise of the self-determination movement. Vast and rapid social change was taking place at the same time as vast and rapid scientific change, and their interplay created a complex mélange of reciprocal influences affecting both of them in ways still not completely understood.

Philosophers, sociologists, theologians, and lawyers came to realize that they had much to contribute to the discussion. As the 1960s merged into the 1970s, they weighed in on one issue after another, writing articles and books that revealed such a depth of comprehension of medical problems that the profession could no longer ignore their contributions to the discourse about appropriateness of care and the patterns by which decisions were made. And thus was born the modern field of "bioethics," a word that came into being in the late 1960s to encompass the full range of quandaries that arise from scientific discovery. The purpose of bioethics, as articulated by one of its founders, the philosopher and historian Albert Jonsen, is to "designate a vision of a world in which scientific advances were linked to human and environmental values in an evolutionary progress toward human community."

"Progress toward human community" is—among other things—progress toward decision-making that is less in the hands of scientists and physicians alone and progressively more in the hands of the affected communities and individuals. The most obvious casualty of such an approach to medical care was the old tradition of paternalism. Being responsive to the demand for self-determination, bioethics is a natural outgrowth of the events of the 1960s. Not unexpectedly, it brought with it the principle of paternalism's opposite: autonomy, and the notion that a man or woman seeking medical care is the man or woman best qualified to make decisions that affect the nature and extent of that care—not one's doctor, but oneself. On the part of the patient, this involves becoming well informed by whatever means necessary; on the part of the doctor, it means sharing all available information, including the benefits as well as the risks and potential for harm inherent in every intervention. Not unexpectedly, autonomy soon became the central focus of the rapidly growing field of bioethics.

Barron H. Lerner's book is centered around the transformative events affecting medical practice that came into focus in and around the late 1960s, and the consequences of the new medical ethics. The story that Lerner tells is of the laity's increasing involvement in matters traditionally left to the profession, including the lessening of its certainty of benevolence and scientific infallibility. Ultimately, the book issues an appeal of sorts—to both doctors and patients—hoping to ensure that a well-informed public will continue to make reasonable demands on scientists and physicians that can only result in "progress toward human community."

Lerner is a medical historian whose previous book, *The Breast Cancer Wars*, won the Welch Medal, the highest literary honor bestowed by his colleagues in the American Association for the History of Medicine. But he is also a working physician, and his very readable new book is suffused with insights that come from years at the bedsides of the sick, dealing with the real problems of real people living in real time, where life-determining decisions must often be made under conditions of intense pressure and with incomplete information. In such circumstances, the deliberated and sometimes theoretical formulations of bioethical thinking must sometimes be temporarily abandoned in the interests of immediate action and the resolution of life-threatening problems. Lerner appreciates the individuality that every patient and every disease bring to the therapeutic encounter, and he sees such idealized benchmarks as evidence-based medicine and the randomized controlled trial for what they are: enormously useful tools as criteria of the highest standard of practice, and yet necessarily limited by the uniqueness of the disease process in each man, woman, or child who falls victim to illness, and limited also by the circumstances in which the illness takes place. "The larger point," he makes clear in a sentence that summarizes the underlying truth of clinical decision-making, "is that the care of all patients . . . is based on percentages and hunches, backed up, when possible, by the medical literature."

Lerner's engrossing book is, in fact, about uniqueness. The thirteen people described in the development of his thesis are unique not only because of the disease processes that brought them to medical attention, but also because of who they were. Each was a celebrity, either because he or she had been famous before getting sick or because sickness thrust him or her into the limelight, by focusing the public eye on the pathology of which he or she would become a symbol. Such luminaries as John Foster Dulles and Rita Hayworth share Lerner's pages with previous unknowns such as Barney Clark and Libby Zion. The historian-physician takes the reader chronologically through the series of celebrities, from Lou Gehrig's first symptoms in 1938 to the most recent report on the condition of Lorenzo Odone in 2006. The lessons to be found in their stories are of several sorts, but they all intertwine into the message that Lerner intends us to carry away after his last paragraph has been read. That ultimate message is about autonomy: its values, its limits, and its occasional dangers.

To read about these celebrities is to consider the emergence of a group of factors that nowadays are so commonplace that they have come to be expected, such as public knowledge and perhaps the deliberate publicization of the details of an eminent person's diagnosis and even symptoms; the personal involvement of the celebrity in the movement to call attention to the disease and to find ways to treat it; the rallying to the cause by others affected by the disease, and the formation of advocacy groups of which the celebrity is the focus; the consequent challenging of the medical profession, not only to find new methods of treatment, but to become involved in strategies being advanced by the personal efforts—sometimes including his or her own ferreting out of non-standard approaches—of the celebrity. None of these factors could have appeared did we not live in a culture that celebrates fame. We tend to see something of ourselves—or of our fantasies—reflected in the lives of prominent people who capture the public imagination. Sometimes the celebrity represents the best we dream of being; in some deep, ever-hopeful compartment of the mind, he or she epitomizes what we believe we can yet become, or what we might have become had circumstances been just a bit different. And sometimes a celebrity shows us the basest qualities of which we fear ourselves culpable, and becomes a focus of scorn that enables the fiction in which we need to believe: the fiction of our own moral superiority.

Of course, neither of these extremes exhausts the list of motives for our culture's fascination with the activities of public figures. But whatever its source, identification with another seems always to lie close beneath the surface of the scrutiny, the judgment, and even the imitation of


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the prominent that sometimes occurs. It is this sense of identification, unacknowledged or even unrecognized as it often is, that accounts for the lessons—the good and the bad—that we take from our images of such people. We can imitate them to our profit, or to our peril, or to both at the same time.

The cult of celebrity requires some degree of myth-making (or "framing," as scholars of journalism like to call it) in order to work its effects on us, even if the myth is as bogus as George Washington's constant virtue or Richard Nixon's constant vice. Though we search for the reality at its core, we nevertheless respond to the general framework of the fully developed myth, because it serves some need within us. Whether drawn to the lives of celebrities because they inspire us or because they are cautionary tales (or both), what we are likely to see in each instance is an aspect or a possibility within ourselves.

Celebrities stand out as exceptions to the general culture at the same time as they exemplify it. Cultural saints and cultural scoundrels alike, they reflect more than they determine the values of the times in which they live. In some respect they are us, and something in our innermost selves knows it. And it is in their being us that their influence lies. For every man-on-the-street who has benefited from the increased self-determination that some celebrities have exemplified, there is another who has been led astray by it. In the case of disease, for example, for every man or woman who has been helped to see perceptively into an illness and become active in its amelioration, there is another who has done himself or herself immeasurable harm by emulating a famous someone who has sought out unproven, unprovable, and ultimately dangerous recourses. For every Morris Abram, whose example, as described below, led others to informed searching for science, there has been a Steve McQueen, whose example led others—many thousands of them, in his case—to the quackery of dubious healers serving up dubious promises of certain cure. Lerner's book shows us both sides of the cult of celebrity, but its message is clearly optimistic. As in all other matters in which celebrities are used as models, the publicization of their illnesses has reflected the tenor of the times, and the tenor of our time—at least where medicine is concerned—favors informed and intelligent self-involvement. In other arenas, however, the crackpots have too often had their way.

These various strands of Lerner's meticulously documented narrative come together step by step to tell the story of the old paternalism, the evolving ethos of resistance to it, and the rise of that new phenomenon in medicine: the active involvement of patients in their own care and the decisions that determine how it will be carried out. The function of the celebrity in each case after the change occurred in the early 1970s was to be a kind of standard bearer who, by his or her public eminence, called attention not only to the disease but also to the necessity that those suffering from it take a decisive role in their individual therapy.

It is no coincidence that the first of Lerner's evolving examples of public acknowledgment of an illness being endured by a high-profile figure—and of its being used to further the twin causes of self-determination and medical progress—does not take full form until 1973, only a few years after the field of bioethics was born, and with it the notion of autonomy. In that year, the renowned civil rights lawyer Morris Abram was found to have acute myelocytic leukemia, with a prognosis of six months. Abram immediately set about to discover as much as he could about the pathology of the disease and then went on to exert a strong and soon well-publicized


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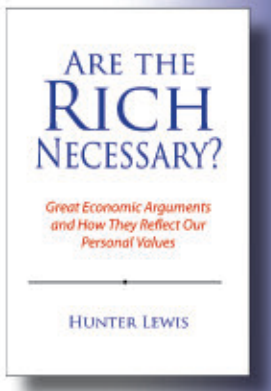


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influence on the course of his own successful therapy. "The era of the activist patient was dawning," writes Lerner, "and sick celebrities like Abram were leading by example." If Abram and the later exemplars of Lerner's lesson could do it, then so could ordinary people.

The chance had been lost again and again—in the 1930s, when Lou Gehrig was revealed to be suffering with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and as late as 1969, when the Chicago Bears football player Brian Piccolo was diagnosed with lung cancer. But with Abram, the time had arrived, scientifically and culturally. "Beginning in the 1970s," Lerner writes, "the stories evolved to incorporate some element of opposition to, or at least questioning of, the medical profession, the Food and Drug Administration, and other representatives of 'the establishment.' The implication was that even celebrity patients could not assume that everything possible was being done to cure them."

But the publicization of celebrity illness served yet another function, as significant as its ability to mobilize patients' involvement in the details of treatment. "More than providing good practical advice, ill celebrities have delivered something else: stories of tenacity, inspiration, and hope in a time of crisis," Lerner writes. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary that they tell their stories in such a way as to have unalloyed meaning for those who might be helped by them. In other words, it was necessary to "spin," or perhaps merely to "frame," the narrative to provide the desired effect. Real life often does not play itself out precisely in the way it must be made to seem if it is to be sufficiently inspirational; celebrities and those who told their stories allowed themselves leeway to alter details just enough to deliver the desired message, and it was this spun message that became part of the public consciousness. "Overwhelmingly, the stories that became fixed were those that had a particular cultural resonance, those that somehow provided meaning to the public. Just as celebrities could define popular tastes in clothes, food, and style, so, too, could they demonstrate how to be a successful patient and, increasingly over time, a successful disease activist."

The quality and the quantity of the various forms and degrees of spin has varied. In general, most have provided inspiring messages so close to the reality of the actual events that they continue to serve as beacons leading others toward meaningful improvements in their own care. After Abram had succeeded in hectoring his physicians to give him the novel combination of chemotherapy and immunotherapy that he believed had saved his life, he was interviewed by a staff writer for *The New York Times*, resulting in an article that read like "a cohesive narrative of what had been an extremely complicated and rocky illness," in order to make the efforts toward final resolution seem far smoother than they had actually been. When he later wrote *The Day Is Short*, a book about his ordeal, Abram "crafted an account of his experiences . . . that had a coherence and trajectory that had never existed. Although he was surely trying to be as truthful as possible, the outcome of the story necessarily affected how it was told." The article and the book accurately described the details of Abram's odyssey toward cure, but they placed so much emphasis on personal determination that a reader could hardly be blamed for coming away with the certainty of an underlying message that willpower and optimism were the deciding elements in reversing the course of organic pathology, rather than hard slogging on the part of his doctors and himself.

Lerner rightly warns that "this logic, is, of course, a fallacy. Since dead leukemia patients are not alive to describe how they fought their diseases, it seems, in retrospect, that only survivors had enough willpower to live." As every clinical physician can attest, for every man or woman who has "beaten" a disease seemingly by the sheer will to do it, there are plenty of others who have succumbed, despite an equal or even greater degree of optimism and determination. In the final analysis, the reason for Abram's survival cannot be known, though it was most likely the new chemotherapy regimen chosen by his doctors, even if some efficacy of the immunological treatments cannot be ruled out. But the basic truth of his story was not altered by the relatively small degree of spin that he and others applied to it, namely that his own initiatives made the difference: becoming informed about the latest research; perseverance in seeking the best possible physicians; taking an active role in making medical decisions. And so the experience of one well-known and well-connected patient had a positive impact on the decisions of many thousands of others not as privileged.

At the other end of the spectrum of spin—and here the spin might be called extreme—falls the story that has become known by the name of the Hollywood movie made about it, *Lorenzo's Oil*. Lorenzo Odone was born with a rare genetic neurological disorder—adrenoleukodystrophy, or ALD—thought to be caused by a buildup of compounds called saturated very-long-chain fatty acids (VLCFAs). The disease, which affects only males, is usually diagnosed between the ages of five and ten, and gradually results in paralysis, deafness, and the inability to speak or swallow. Lorenzo's highly educated parents, Michaela and Augusto, made themselves experts on the most minute biological details of the disease process and on the various laboratory and clinical efforts being made to influence its course, wherever on the globe they were to be found.

By a combination of diligent library study, the seeking out of scientists who were doing research on aspects of the sometimes obscure biochemistry, and their own methods of dietary experimentation on their son and his maternal aunt—who was a healthy carrier of the disease, but with elevated blood levels of VLCFAs—they determined that the ingestion of a combination of oleic and erucic acid, which came to be called "Lorenzo's oil," dramatically lowered the amount of the toxic material. They wrote a series of articles about the phenomenon and soon became public figures, covered by the international press and receiving various awards. During all this time, they were working with several of the relatively few experts on the treatment of the disease, sometimes compatibly and sometimes with a degree of contentiousness largely the result of the friction between the caution of a scientist and the sense of urgency of a parent.

In 1990, the Australian film director George Miller suggested to the Odones that a movie be made about their quest. From the beginning, Miller intended to construct *Lorenzo's Oil* in the form of the sort of myth as described by Joseph Campbell, in which the final triumph of the hero or heroes—in this case the Odones, played by Susan Sarandon and Nick Nolte—takes place after many setbacks. The movie contains crucial inaccuracies; it distorts the characters and motives of the physicians and certain of the parents of ALD children; and it appears to make claims for Lorenzo's treatment not completely justified by the reality of its degree of effectiveness. Moreover, it glorifies a level of education, personal research, and in-your-face activism of which few patients or families are capable, raising the bar of expectations beyond what is possible for any but a very few.

What some viewers, especially knowledgeable physicians and affected relatives, have found most egregious is the movie's


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implication that the oil, though it became available too late to reverse Lorenzo's deterioration, had allowed many boys to lead healthy lives. Among the multiple complaints about the production made by scientists and others was the soon-to-be well-known fact that between 40 percent and 50 percent of boys born with the ALD gene either develop a mild form of the disease as adults or never manifest any symptoms at all. Though the film's action concludes with a scene of dozens of healthy ALD boys running, swimming, and playing baseball, there is no way of knowing whether their treatment with Lorenzo's oil had an iota of effect on their conditions. There has never been a controlled clinical trial of the oil, nor is there likely to be one.

Still, the movie and the many journalistic stories of the Odones' long journey ultimately served the same purpose—though admittedly in an extreme and distorted way—as did the far more accurate publicizing of the illnesses of other celebrities in Lerner's book. No longer could patients and their families sit back, expecting competent medical care. They had to become active participants, even scouring the globe for experts and possible treatments. "The real value of the movie," Augusto Odone said, "has been to show people that in cases where you have a disease in the family or yourself, you have to be proactive—don't wait for doctors to tell you what the remedies are."

Albert Jonsen, quoted earlier, published a book in 1990 called *The New Medicine and the Old Ethics*, a thoughtful and perceptive disquisition on a dilemma that has sought resolution since the beginnings of Western medicine: the never-ending attempt to bring harmony to the competing claims of altruism and self-interest so that both patient and doctor are benefited. A difficulty for anyone, the conflict is writ large in the moral life of doctors. The new medicine that appeared in the 1960s, and the new autonomy that followed soon after, changed the face of the relationship between physician and patient—they "raised the consciousness" of both groups, of all the stakeholders. Working together, though in rather different frames of mind, scientific discovery and the self-determination movement brought about the assertiveness and the advocacy ably documented by Barron Lerner, and so contributed to medicine's ability to solve many more clinical and ethical problems than ever before.

That autonomy and assertiveness have limits beyond which they become interference and are ultimately counterproductive or at least frustrating, both to medical science and to patients, cannot be doubted, as is shown by the case of Lorenzo's oil. But that they can benefit individuals, large groups of patients, and the scientific enterprise in general has now been established beyond question. As always in the uncertain art that we call healing, patients and doctors must think less in terms of autonomy or paternalism and more in terms of understanding one another, as they make their way together through the thickets of disease and its therapies. It is a virtue of Lerner's fine book that it helps us to understand the multifarious complexities that enter into the healing of the sick, and the ways in which some of them have been addressed. Not the least of those ways, as the author puts it in his subtitle, are those influenced for the good by "celebrity patients and how we look at medicine." As in every other aspect of public life and the affairs of humankind, a more open society is a healthier society. ◆

## Steven Hahn
# REBEL REBEL

**TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE: A BIOGRAPHY**
By Madison Smartt Bell
(Pantheon Books, 333 pp., $27)

**READING THE MAN: A PORTRAIT OF ROBERT E. LEE THROUGH HIS PRIVATE LETTERS**
By Elizabeth Brown Pryor
(Viking, 658 pp., $29.95)

I.

Two hundred years ago, the Anglo-American slave trade was formally abolished, culminating a struggle that was several decades old. Slavery was so deeply anchored in the Atlantic world, its defenders and beneficiaries so formidably placed, that nascent abolitionists in metropolitan centers such as London, Philadelphia, and Paris set their sights chiefly on the trade rather than the institution of slavery itself. If the slave trade were to cease, they imagined, slaveholders would have to show more concern for the well-being of their slaves, and a gradual process of amelioration might then be initiated, resulting at some point in complete emancipation.

Yet by the time the British Parliament and the American Congress got around to ending their involvement in the slave trade in 1807–1808, the Atlantic slave system had already been dealt major blows, principally by abolitionists closer to the ground. During the American Revolution, thousands of slaves owned by Patriots (including some owned by Jefferson, Washington, and Madison) fled to British lines in quest of freedom. And even before American independence had been won, new states in New England and the Middle Atlantic—responding to the unrest of slaves and the circulation of revolutionary ideas—had commenced what turned out to be a protracted emancipation.

But by far the heaviest and most consequential blow against slavery was delivered on the island of St. Domingue, the jewel of the French colonial empire, where in August 1791 slaves launched a massive rebellion. And unlike slave rebellions that came before and after in the Americas, the rebellion in St. Domingue succeeded. Over the course of more than a decade, slaves, in complex alliance with free people of color, managed to defeat the armies of France, Britain, and Spain; abolish slavery; kill or drive off their owners; and establish an independent republic. Their extraordinary feats during the 1790s and what they achieved by 1804 are known to us as the Haitian Revolution.

The Haitian Revolution sent shock waves across the Atlantic world. It struck fear into the hearts of slaveholders, raised hope in the minds of the millions still enslaved, and reconfigured politics in Europe and the Americas. Hostile observers from near and far, including heads of state, viewed the making of Haiti as a contagion to be contained, if not destroyed, and they would try mightily through force of arms, economic sanctions, and diplomatic isolation to do just that. But nowhere were the repercussions of the Haitian Revolution more profound—and in ways that have rarely been recognized, let alone appreciated—than in the United States.

What the slaves did in Haiti intensified the developing conflict over slavery in the United States, and may have made the Civil War more likely. These

*Steven Hahn is a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of A Nation Under our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration.*



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biographies of Toussaint Louverture and Robert E. Lee allow us to see some of these interconnections, and they suggest that the fortunes of these men, great military and political leaders of the 1790s and 1860s respectively—and great rebels in their distinctive ways—may indeed have been linked. They also put into rather surprising perspective the historical stature of each man.

Neither the Haitian Revolution nor Toussaint Louverture is a household name in the United States, at least outside certain communities of African descent. They are rarely found in American history textbooks (at the high school or college level), and even well-educated high school students will likely go to college—and perhaps graduate from college— without having heard of either. "Toussaint Louverture can fairly be called the highest-achieving African American hero of all time," Madison Smartt Bell observes at the outset of his biography. "And yet, two hundred years after his death in prison and the declaration of independence of Haiti, the nation whose birth he made possible, he remains one of the least known and most poorly understood among those heroes."

Bell's fascinating book may help to remedy this circumstance. Until fairly recently, there were few works in English dealing either with Toussaint or the Haitian Revolution more generally, and historians of the French Revolution, with which events in Haiti were intimately related, ignored or gave passing reference to them. C. L. R. James's still-towering *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, written in 1938, for many years stood virtually alone in the English-language literature. But owing in good part to a rapidly developing concern with "Atlantic history," the past decade or so has witnessed something of a turnabout, with important works on the Haitian Revolution produced by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Carolyn Fick, David Geggus, Julius Scott, and Laurent Dubois. Madison Smartt Bell has himself been a figure in this trend, completing a highly praised fictional trilogy (he is best known as a novelist) on Toussaint and the great slave rebellion during this same period. But *Toussaint Louverture* is the first substantial biographical account in English since James's *Black Jacobins*, and it is a worthy successor.

Bell could not have had an easy time of it, because Toussaint did not leave a substantial body of personal papers. And no wonder. Notwithstanding the heights of power and influence that he ultimately attained, Toussaint claimed remarkably humble beginnings. He was born a slave, sometime between 1739 and 1746 (no record of his birth has been found), on the Bréda plantation, not far from the port city of Cap Français on the northern plain of St. Domingue. At an early age, Toussaint Bréda (as he was first known) was put in charge of the livestock, which enabled him to gain expertise as a horse-trainer and veterinarian, and eventually renown as an equestrian. Perhaps for these reasons, he was, by 1772, elevated to the position of coachman for Bayon de Libertat, who had become manager of the Bréda estate.

By all accounts Toussaint developed a close personal relationship—a friendship of sorts—with Bayon de Libertat, which likely played an important role in his being manumitted in 1776 and gaining a comfortable footing as a free man of color. Although he continued to live on the Bréda estate, Toussaint came to own several properties as well as a slave, whom he quickly set free; and while he could not claim the resources of the wealthy *gens de couleur* (free people of color), he soon had, in Bell's words, "a surprising number of common interests with members of the white planter class." When the French Revolution erupted in 1789, Toussaint would seem to have been identified with St. Domingue's slaveholding regime.

Appearances, of course, can be misleading. We do not know when Toussaint Bréda became involved with those plotting rebellion in St. Domingue. Nor do we know how Toussaint initially imagined what he was doing. What we do know is that the Haitian Revolution was a complex political process, played out on local and international stages, in which the goals of different groups of instigators moved in directions that none would have predicted or necessarily desired.

There were, in fact, few harbingers of rebellion or revolution in St. Domingue before the 1790s. Unlike much of the British Caribbean, where the eighteenth century saw a series of maroon wars and slave revolts, St. Domingue was relatively quiet. Aside from endemic maroonage and a slave plot in 1757, the political cauldron was on low simmer, and St. Domingue became the world's leading producer of sugar and coffee. By 1789, nearly half a million slaves—most African-born and survivors of the Middle Passage—worked on the estates, outnumbering resident whites and free people of color (about 30,000 each) by at least seven to one. Many of the wealthiest white planters (*grands blancs*) were absentees, living principally in France and drawing their checks, and many of the men who sat in France's National Assembly either owned property in the colonies or had ties to the colonial trade.

By the 1780s, however, there were rumblings of discontent both in Paris and in St. Domingue, and these may have become more explosive on their own. The outbreak of revolution in France provided volatile new tinder. The opportunity was seized first not by slaves but by the *gens de couleur*, who suffered civil and political disabilities despite their wealth and service in the colonial militia. Influenced by the apparently egalitarian sensibilities of the French revolutionaries, they sought equal standing with whites—not an end to slavery—and, when rebuffed by the National Assembly in 1790, raised a rebellion in St. Domingue that was brutally crushed.

Slaves on the northern plain were soon looking to press their own advantage. It was not emancipation but amelioration that they sought—an end to the use of the whip and three free days a week rather than two; and when they met secretly in the forest at Bois Caïman in mid-August, they thought that the king of France might be on their side, thwarted on the island by their recalcitrant masters. The conspirators were mostly privileged slaves, many of them drivers or *commandeurs*, representing thousands of slaves on the plantations in the surrounding area. Among them were Boukman Dutty, Jean-François Papillon, and Georges Biassou. A week later, on the night of August 22, they led the slaves in rebellion.

Bell does not know whether Toussaint was with the conspirators at Bois Caïman (he doubts it) and is similarly unclear as to Toussaint's whereabouts during the initial stages of the rebellion (he surmises that Toussaint remained at the Bréda plantation for about a month). But he regards Toussaint as "a deeply secret co-conspirator," and claims that sometime during the fall of 1791 Toussaint left the Bréda estate and headed into the mountains, where he joined a band of rebel slaves led by Biassou. There he first served as Biassou's secretary (he was able to read and write) and then gained the title of *médecin général* (general doctor), obviously combining his veterinary skills with a knowledge of herbal medicine. All the while, he maintained communications with the rebellion's other leaders with a confidence suggesting he was one of them.

Initially, the slaves fought the military forces of their masters and of France with


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a fury more reminiscent of rioting than of an organized campaign. Boukman was a Vodou priest, as Biassou and many other leaders were alleged to have been (but not Toussaint, who was Catholic). Bell describes their early forays as "jihadlike onslaughts." Yet as the rebels' casualties mounted, they increasingly embraced—apparently with Toussaint's influence—guerrilla tactics common to West African warfare (Toussaint's father was born in West Africa, of elite status, before being enslaved and shipped to St. Domingue), bewildering French troops used to battling on open fields.

By December the rebellion seemed to have run aground. Boukman was killed in battle and decapitated, his head displayed in the public square of Cap Français, and the other leaders, including Toussaint, looked to sue for peace and to save their skins. In exchange for their own freedom, for the abolition of the whip, for one extra free day each week, and for a general amnesty, they offered to return their rebel troops to the plantations as slaves. It was a move that reflected not only their desperation, but also the limited aims of their rebellion thus far. Had the slaveholding authorities in St. Domingue agreed to the deal—and there was precedent for doing so—the episode might have been over, and Toussaint relegated to one of history's very minor supporting roles.

Instead the authorities rejected the rebel offer with contempt, and the rebel leaders had little choice but to go back on the offensive. Within a year, they had come to embrace as their goal liberty for all of the enslaved, and Toussaint had emerged as general of their army. At the same time, the revolutionary government in France finally decided to extend civil and political equality to the *gens de couleur*, and sent a group of commissioners to St. Domingue, led by Léger Sonthonax, to enforce its decree. Before long, Sonthonax had his hands full, not only with disgruntled whites who despised the prospect of racial equality, but also with the security of St. Domingue and its institutions. For in early 1793, following the execution of Louis XVI, both Britain and Spain declared war on France, and the Spanish, from their base in neighboring Santo Domingo, hoped to attract the armed slave insurgents to their side by offering them freedom. Jean-François, Biassou, and Toussaint, along with ten thousand troops, quickly took them up on it, and while Jean-François and Biassou would hold superior military rank in the Spanish army, Toussaint began to develop some autonomy there, too.

The Spanish offer of freedom in return for military service now forced the hand of the French officials in St. Domingue. Sonthonax and his commissioners first agreed to manumit any slave who would fight for France, and then, by late summer, moved toward a general emancipation accompanied by the rights of French citizenship. Suspicious of Sonthonax's authority, the rebel leaders remained loyal to the Spanish and their king, but as if to steal Sonthonax's thunder Toussaint issued his own proclamation on August 29, 1793, two years after the rebellion had commenced: "I am Toussaint Louverture; perhaps my name has made itself known to you. I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and Equality to reign in St. Domingue. I am working to make that happen. Unite yourselves to us, brothers, and fight with us for the same cause."

Toussaint Bréda's self-transformation into Toussaint Louverture ("the opening") has been the subject of prolonged, and unresolved, speculation. Bell, who considers Toussaint a "master manipulator of layers of meaning," claims that Louverture has a "Vodouisant resonance," invoking the spirit of gates and crossroads. At all events, Toussaint as Louverture truly took history's stage.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Bell's biography is his attention to the political and military dynamics of revolutionary St. Domingue. Readers who might think (as most would) that slaves and people of African descent more generally were outside the arenas of formal politics and military affairs in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic will have to re-evaluate their views. In Bell's account, the slaves and the *gens de couleur* of St. Domingue emerge as political actors every bit as significant as those who owned the plantations or made policy in European and American capitals. And Toussaint Louverture comes to us as a political and military genius—formally untutored though he was—and a remarkably modern man.

The challenges that Toussaint faced would have confounded, and likely defeated, the most skilled, experienced, and cosmopolitan of leaders. We probably will never fully know how he managed to meet them. But by drawing upon the available sources, Bell gives a meaningful, and largely convincing, sense of this, one that emphasizes Toussaint's hunger for power and confidence in wielding it, his extraordinary political intuition, his ruthlessness, and his vision for the future of St. Domingue that lent coherence to many of the things he tried to do. The only figure of the age with whom Toussaint could have been compared was the one who ultimately brought him down: Napoleon.

Toussaint began to disentangle himself from the Spanish and his rebel allies early in 1794. It may have been the behavior of Jean-François and Biassou, who had begun to trade in slaves, and it may have been that the Spanish military did not show him sufficient favor; but the official embrace of emancipation and citizenship by the government in revolutionary France in February 1794 undoubtedly played an important role, and by mid-April Toussaint was fighting for France. With him came Henry Christophe (who, like Toussaint, had been free), Moyse, and Jean-Jacques Dessalines (both of whom had been slaves). With a series of impressive moves, Toussaint made relatively quick work of the forces under Jean-François and Biassou. By the summer of 1795 the Spanish had signed a treaty of peace with the French, and Jean-François and Biassou had retreated to Spain and Florida, respectively. Their followers then joined Toussaint, who, for his successes, was promoted to brigadier-general by France.

It was a rather stunning accomplishment for a man who had not even served in the colonial militia. Bell recounts that Toussaint became notorious for such rapid movements that at times he and his troops seemed to be in several places

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at once. His maneuvering was so adept that he was able to achieve bloodless victories, and his preference throughout was to win by means of diplomacy rather than force of arms. But, if necessary, he pressed on, cleverly and relentlessly. Soon he sent the British forces packing as well, and became commander-in-chief of the French army in St. Domingue. In admiration, French General Étienne Laveaux called Toussaint "the savior of the constituted authorities" and "a black Spartacus, the negro Raynal predicted would avenge the outrages done his race."

As Spartacus though he may have been, Toussaint did not seek a world turned upside down. While he remained resolutely committed to the freedom of St. Domingue's slaves, he also believed that their emancipation could be secured only if the island were able to prosper and to defend itself. And that, for Toussaint, meant restoring the plantations and the staple economy, proving "to France and all the Nations" that "Saint Domingue would recover all its riches with the work of free hands." He wanted the freedpeople to return to the sugar and coffee estates and work steadily for wages, and he was ready to use the iron hand of the military to keep them at it and even to encourage the return of *grands blancs* estate owners, who had fled into exile, to help rebuild plantations destroyed or damaged by the rebellion.

Toussaint's rise to power and his desire to have St. Domingue fully involved in the Atlantic economy quickly made him a political figure of international consequence, and established the basis for a developing relationship with the United States. It was not a relation of ideological affinity, but of economic and political self-interest, which nonetheless promised genuine cooperation. Toussaint hoped to maintain a longstanding and substantial trade, and he offered protection to Americans and their ships; the Federalist administration of John Adams looked to cater to their merchant constituents and weaken the French. Indeed, St. Domingue was allowed to evade the embargo that the United States had imposed on French shipping, and Toussaint was quietly encouraged to declare independence from France—which he resisted. It was, Bell writes, a "risky game—but Toussaint was playing it with consummate skill."

Toussaint's skills and power would be further tested within St. Domingue itself. Although the *gens de couleur*, led by André Rigaud and based chiefly in the island's south and west, shared Toussaint's economic vision and had been allied with him for some time, they feared his steady empowerment and intention—correctly, as it turned out—to extend his authority over all of St. Domingue. But when growing tensions exploded into a brutal civil war in 1799, Toussaint humbled his new adversaries. He rallied his black troops by warning them that "the mulattoes … want to make the rest of you go back into slavery," escaped several ambushes, and enlisted support from the French, the British, and the Americans. By the summer of 1800, Rigaud had taken flight. Toussaint announced an amnesty, but he left Dessalines to inflict more lethal reprisals.

Toussaint celebrated his victory over Rigaud by marching into Santo Domingo and later by writing a new constitution that formalized the abolition of slavery, declared St. Domingue both free and French, outlawed racial discrimination, and made Catholicism the only officially recognized faith. But the constitution also imposed a draconian labor regime and made Toussaint governor for life (which Alexander Hamilton, in correspondence, had urged him to do). This was not, to be sure, the sort of freedom that most former slaves had in mind (none were involved in writing the constitution); they wanted plots of land to farm on their own account. Thus, in the fall of 1801 rebellions swept the northern plain—organized with the aid of Moyse—which Toussaint, along with Dessalines and Christophe, mercilessly suppressed.

Even more serious trouble was brewing in other parts of the Atlantic. Napoleon Bonaparte, who had become ruler of France in 1799, was not amused by Toussaint's initiatives. Although Toussaint insisted that he would remain part of the French commonwealth, Bonaparte saw Toussaint's invasion of Santo Domingo and proclamation of a constitution as dangerous moves in the direction of independence. When Thomas Jefferson, who was adamantly hostile to Toussaint's regime, defeated the Federalist John Adams in 1800, Napoleon got the green light to act. He sent a very large expedition to St. Domingue under the command of his brother-in-law, Emmanuel Leclerc, with secret orders to re-impose slavery and to arrest and deport all black officers, including Toussaint.

Neither Toussaint nor his lieutenants initially understood what was in store for them, but they mounted an impressive defense, which Bell chronicles with a fine military eye. Indeed, while Leclerc won a series of victories, those victories were not secured, and his troops began to succumb to the tropical diseases that had long made the Caribbean a white man's grave. Still, his woes were not obvious to Toussaint and his comrades, who instead came to believe that their time was running out. In April 1802, Christophe suddenly submitted to French authority in return for the maintenance of his military rank, and before long Toussaint rode into Cap Français with Dessalines and three hundred of his horsemen ready to surrender so long as his generals would be incorporated into the French army and he could go off to live quietly on his property at Ennery.

It is not at all clear what kind of future Toussaint imagined for himself and his revolution as he rode off to Ennery. Resistance continued, French soldiers remained on the move, and, savvy as he was, Toussaint could hardly have felt that his safety or the prospects of a free and French St. Domingue were assured. Perhaps that is why he agreed to meet with a French officer, ostensibly about troop placements, hoping to find a diplomatic solution to the continuing crisis. It was a big gamble, and he lost. Toussaint showed up for the meeting with a small guard; he was seized and quickly put aboard a vessel sailing for France. Once there, he was transported to a mountain fortress where, on August 22, 1802, almost eleven years to the day after the slave rebellion in St. Domingue erupted, he began a miserable imprisonment. He died the following April in his frigid cell, never having received the trial he desperately wanted.

But the revolution that Toussaint had come to lead did not die with him. When word reached St. Domingue of the French restoration of slavery in neighboring Guadeloupe, the officers who had served Toussaint—Christophe and Dessalines chief among them—deserted the French and re-ignited rebellion. Increasingly decimated by disease, the French army quickly collapsed, Leclerc along with it. Soon they would be sailing out of Cap Français, paltry remnants of the 80,000 who had arrived less than two years earlier, another great European power humbled militarily by lowly slaves and free people of color. On January 1, 1804, Dessalines, appropriating the Indian name "Ayiti" for the island, proclaimed the independence of Haiti, the second new nation in the Americas.

ANTHONY RUSSO



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## II.

Robert E. Lee was born, in 1807, into a world that Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution had helped to make. In the early 1790s, exiles from the slave rebellion in St. Domingue—*grands blancs*, wealthy *gens de couleur*, and some of their slaves—began arriving in Lee's native Virginia, as they did in Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans, and influencing the cultural life and political discourse. In 1800, Gabriel, a slave blacksmith in Richmond, organized a large rebellion, aborted at the last minute, that revealed knowledge of what had occurred in St. Domingue. Most significantly, in 1803 Napoleon, having abandoned dreams of a colonial empire in the Americas after his disastrous defeat in St. Domingue, sold the huge territory of Louisiana to Thomas Jefferson and opened a new phase in the developing struggle over slavery's future in the United States.

Unlike Toussaint, Lee is a household name, the subject of many hundreds of volumes, a cultural and political icon. What other historical figure waged war against—committed treason against—his own government, met with defeat, escaped punishment for his offenses, and was then lionized by foe and friend alike, eventually regarded in many quarters (at least among the white folk) as a national hero? Scholars, even those of northern birth and undoubted Union sympathies, have celebrated Lee's integrity, commitment, creativity, military genius, and his ability to battle against great odds, as well as the reverence of his troops for him. Most historians have overlooked, excused, or denied his involvement with slaves and slavery, and have avoided blaming him either for political irresponsibility during the secession crisis or for the bloodbath that the Civil War became. Their views have been influential, especially with the public. "History," one of Lee's biographers solemnly writes, "needs Robert E. Lee whole."

Elizabeth Brown Pryor proposes to give us just that. *Reading the Man* may have the feel of a postmodern study, but it is rather a series of what Pryor calls "historical excursions" driven by a collection of Lee's private letters that she inadvertently stumbled upon. The book's chapters begin with lengthy excerpts from some of those letters (not as many as you might expect), and they frame, thematically, what follows. Pryor is interested in mixing the private Lee and the public Lee, and her book reads more like a conventional biography than an exercise in hermeneutics.

But do we really need another huge life of Robert E. Lee? There is not very much in *Reading the Man* that will be new to specialists, or to the many devotees of Lee who have pored over myriad biographical accounts and, especially, studies of his Civil War exploits. For its first hundred pages or so, I myself wondered what the point of this book might be, not because it was poorly done but because it seemed so familiar. Then Pryor moves onto important historical and interpretive terrain with a far more discerning and critical eye than most of her scholarly or popular predecessors, and forces readers to confront a series of troubling issues. Given her largely sympathetic perspective on Lee, the result is all the more devastating.

Robert E. Lee's origins could not have been more different from Toussaint Louverture's. Toussaint was born into slavery, Lee into one of Virginia's (and America's) prominent slaveholding families, with as impressive a set of social and political connections as could be had. Lee's father, "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, was a Revolutionary War hero, close to George Washington, who served in Virginia's House of Delegates, the Continental Congress, and as governor of the state before he married into the famous, and fabulously wealthy, Carter clan. But by the time Robert was born, his father's many financial adventures had begun to backfire, thus initiating what Pryor calls the family's "downward spiral." Before Robert was two, Light-Horse Harry had gone to jail for debt, and by the time his son was seven Harry had fled home, never to return. Robert seems to have been deeply affected.

The Lees' slide left Robert's mother with income chiefly from a Carter family trust, and although Robert knew that their circumstances were insecure, he did manage to receive a splendid education and effectively followed in some of his father's footsteps by enrolling at West Point (against the wishes of his mother). There he made a number of lifelong friends—including P. G. T. Beauregard, Leonidas Polk, and Albert Sydney Johnston—and, owing to his mathematical gifts and to West Point's cutting-edge science curriculum, he ended up in the Army's Corps of Engineers, with assignments taking him to important projects west and south. Along the way he married Mary Custis (a distant relation), granddaughter of George Washington and daughter of George Washington Parke Custis, a wealthy, slaveholding planter who grew up at Mount Vernon and owned an 1,100-acre estate on the Virginia side of the Potomac that he chose to call Arlington.

Pryor uses Robert E. Lee's extant letters, which begin in 1824, to paint a picture of him as husband, father, companion, physical presence. He and Mary were studies in contrasts—he "patient, painstaking, and often passive," she "quick, creative, and volatile"—but, as if using his own father as a negative reference, he was intensely devoted to and emotionally involved with his seven children. (Overly so, it seems: none of his four daughters ever married.) He was also tall and handsome, and relished the female attention that he regularly attracted (apparently without ever straying). Most important, perhaps, we learn that the Mexican War proved to be a seminal event in Lee's life, when he first felt the "seduction of warfare" and "became a warrior."

Although the Mexican War is generally regarded as one of our "little" wars, quickly concluded and often overlooked, such an impression is incorrect. The war was a first trial by fire not only for Robert E. Lee but also for Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Jefferson Davis, and a host of other West Point graduates who would gain fame during the Civil War. It was a major theater of conquest, as the United States laid claim to a large portion of northwestern Mexico—what is now our Southwest—including California. And much as the acquisition of Louisiana did, it shifted the great political question of the day away from the issue of slavery in the states (over which there was considerable agreement as to constitutional interpretation) to the issue of slavery in the federal territories (over which there was much confusion and increasingly deep division).

Lee was extremely reticent about his political views. His father was a Federalist, and he appears to have been a Whig (both parties favored a strong and activist central government) until around 1850, when, according to Pryor, he began to sympathize with the Democrats (who favored state rights). But we do not know how he ever voted, and we have no evidence of his participation in party politics. In some respects, Lee's ideals—in good part a product of his experience as an engineer—seemed close to those of an emerging middle class: he appreciated innovation, self-advancement, and self-control. In other respects, they reflected the worlds of the military and the landed gentry, with emphases on order and hierarchy. He was very much a nationalist as well as a Virginian. Although he appears to have found slavery distasteful, his attitudes and behaviors fit in well with those of many other slaveholders.



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Lee, in sum, was a muddle of contradictions; and he resolved most of them badly. He owned or had an interest in slaves for about as long as he could hold onto them. He believed that black people were better off as slaves in the United States than they would have been had they remained in Africa, and that they should appreciate their circumstances. He thought that slavery was far more of a burden to white people than it was to black people, and he especially disliked slavery's inefficiencies and messiness. He detested abolitionists and blamed them for the country's woes. He was a white supremacist. And when he was instructed to emancipate nearly two hundred slaves as executor of his father-in-law's estate, he did everything possible to postpone it.

Lee's contradictions were most consequential in the secession crisis. During the 1850s, he appeared to symbolize what was left of national cohesion: he served as an officer in the military arm of the federal government of the United States, and even did a brief stint as superintendent of West Point. He enjoyed the fruits of what government largesse had to offer, benefited from a federally sponsored education, and helped to advance the nation's imperial designs; and, although he embraced President Franklin Pierce's bitter denunciation of abolitionism in 1856, he also described secession as "anarchy," as "nothing but revolution."

Why, then, did he resign his post in the U.S. Army, even after the newly elected President Lincoln offered him command of all Union forces, and join the slaveholders' rebellion against the federal government? The answer is that Lee's loyalties to the United States conflicted with his loyalties to Virginia, and he always said that, if required to choose, he would choose his home state. While most scholars recognize this dilemma and regard it as a matter of political principle that they can respect, Pryor is a much tougher critic. Lee, she argues, had several options open to him. He could have stayed in the United States Army, as about 40 percent of Virginia's officers did (including Winfield Scott); he could have sat the war out, supporting neither side, as some other officers did; or he could have made an effort to keep Virginia in the Union or broker a peace, as both statesmen and relatives pleaded with him to do. Instead he "fell back on his old passivity" and "remained resolutely out of the discussions"; when the time came, he threw his lot in with the Confederacy. Whereas Toussaint Louverture became a rebel against slavery, Robert E. Lee became a rebel in its defense, in close accord with the reactionary secessionists, Pryor tells us, on most everything save secession itself.

The misgivings about secession and the Confederacy that Lee may have harbored were jettisoned very early in the war when the Union Army seized and occupied Arlington, the Custis and Lee family estate. "It is hard to overstate the effect the seizure of Arlington had on the Lees," Pryor writes. "From this time forward their identification with the fate of the South never wavered." Indeed, when he assumed command of what would come to be called the Army of Northern Virginia in June 1862, Lee displayed an aggressiveness, a combativeness, and an intent to destroy his enemy that would remain hallmarks of his military disposition.

The price of his bellicosity would be very high. As commander of a rebel army that was outmanned and outgunned by the Union side, he might have taken a page from Toussaint Louverture's playbook (or, for that matter, from George Washington's) and waged a defensive guerrilla-style war, a war of attrition, hoping to wear the Union down and force it to recognize the Confederacy. Instead, he looked to go on the offensive and to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy's armed forces, imagining that northern morale would then quickly deflate. Thus, he chose to invade the North twice and, rather inauspiciously, to attack at Gettysburg, only to be driven back after suffering immense losses. Lee was so confident in his leadership, so self-assured, so taken with the smell of battle, that he often ignored the advice of his generals (he was quick to censure subordinates) and plunged ahead. What the Confederate general D.H. Hill said of the Seven Days could well apply to Lee's entire tenure at the helm of the Army of Northern Virginia: it was "not war—it was murder."

With a brilliant combination of military and diplomatic tactics, the rebel Toussaint defeated three national armies; but the rebel Lee, intent on achieving military victory even at the cost of staggering casualties, failed to defeat one. It was in defeat, of course, that Lee seems to have left his greatest mark. He laid down his sword at Appomattox and told his men to do the same, to go home, and to take the oath of allegiance to the victorious Union. He showed them "a way," as Pryor puts it, "to carry on with self-respect" and to avoid more bloodshed. Although a federal judge in Norfolk recommended that Lee be indicted for treason, no such indictment came and he finished out his life as president of Washington College in Virginia. Arlington had become a Freedmen's Village and then a national cemetery.

Yet the thoughts and the doings of the post–Civil War Lee are often obscured in the cloud of his ostensibly dutiful retreat and reconciliation. Pryor seeks to smoke them out. Lee's conservatism, she shows, may have hardened, and his distaste for African Americans and for majority politics may have intensified. In private writings that "throb with controlled rage," he justified "complete" state sovereignty, advocated restrictions on the elective franchise, thought blacks incapable of managing on their own and feared their potential political power, and backed the policies of conservative Democrats. Sponsoring a meeting of former Confederate generals and other leaders at White Sulfur Springs, he joined their call for an end to the "oppressive misrule" of Reconstruction and a return to the "kindness and humanity" of slavery. Chillingly, he would claim that the war had settled only the question of power, not the question of principle. Lee's students at Washington College seem to have thought so, too: they organized a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.

From his exile on St. Helena, Napoleon Bonaparte reflected on his decision in 1802 to subdue Toussaint Louverture and the slave rebellion in St. Domingue. "It was a great mistake," he conceded. "I should have contented myself to govern it through the intermediary of Toussaint." Indeed, Napoleon insisted that he believed this all along but had yielded "to the opinions of his State council and his ministers, dragged along by the howling of the colonists, who formed a large party in Paris." Perhaps. Yet in raising the might-have-beens of history, the exiled emperor nonetheless allows us to appreciate the significance of the moment.

It is, in fact, difficult to imagine Napoleon permitting something of a copartnership with Toussaint Louverture. It is easier to imagine, historically, that he would have succeeded in defeating Toussaint and re-instating slavery in St. Domingue as he did in Guadeloupe and Martinique, or that the slave rebellion would have been defeated much earlier, weeks or months after it exploded on the northern plain. In either case, Atlantic slavery would have been rejuvenated and France would have held on to Louisiana, leaving the United States to satisfy its ambitions within far more confining borders or to wage war against France to enlarge them. Without western territories for slaveholding and non-slaveholding


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interests to compete over, emancipation might have unfolded throughout the entire country as it did in the northern states: very gradually, with compensation of varying sorts for slaveowners and limited civil and political standing for freed slaves. And Robert E. Lee might have been left redirecting river currents with the Army Corps of Engineers, as he was doing in the late 1830s.

As it happened, Napoleon's failure to destroy the Haitian Revolution and his sale of Louisiana simultaneously energized American expansionists, who were especially prominent among slaveholding Democrats—every piece of territory conquered or otherwise acquired by the United States between the Revolution and 1850 came under the auspices of a slaveholding president—and reminded southern slaveholders of the risks of political weakness. The stage was set for an intense struggle over who would control the American state, and for a slaveholders' rebellion once that struggle seemed lost to them. It was set, too, for the emergence into history of Robert E. Lee.

Had Toussaint managed to evade Napoleon's trap, it is possible—though hardly likely, given the forces arrayed against him—that Haiti's (or St. Domingue's) future might have been put on a more stable and promising basis. At all events, Toussaint Louverture and his revolution cast a giant shadow over the history of the Americas and marked a road, however difficult and treacherous, from slavery to modernity. Next to Toussaint, Robert E. Lee seems rather modest in historical stature, and getting to know him whole alerts us to the dreadful road down which he wished to lead us. ◆

## Emily Wilson
# EARLY HARVEST

**HESIOD: VOLUME I: THEOGONY, WORKS AND DAYS, TESTIMONIA**
Translated and edited by Glenn W. Most
(Harvard University Press,
308 pp., $24)

**HESIOD: VOLUME II: THE SHIELD, CATALOGUE OF WOMEN, OTHER FRAGMENTS**
Translated and edited by Glenn W. Most
(Harvard University Press,
434 pp., $24)

There is an ancient tradition that Hesiod and Homer once competed for a poetry prize. A surviving work on this subject called the *Contest of Hesiod and Homer*—composed in Hellenistic times, although the legend is much earlier—tells us that the archaic poetry slam took place at the funeral games for the king of Euboea. It recounts that Homer responded nimbly to every line, riddle, and question posed by Hesiod, and quoted his own most stirring military passages from the *Iliad*: "Shield rang against shield, helm against helm, man against man, and on their shining helmets the crests tipped with horsehair touched as they lowered their heads, so closely they stood together."

*Emily Wilson teaches classics at the University of Pennsylvania. Her new book, The Death of Socrates, will be published by Harvard University Press this fall.*

The cinematic physical detail is matched by the gripping psychological complexity: Homer finds human intimacy even when people are killing each other.

Hesiod was much less of a crowd-pleaser. His star turn, supposedly the best passage in all his work, began (in Glenn W. Most's translation) in this rather off-putting fashion: "When the Atlas-born Pleiades rise, start the harvest—the plowing, when they set. They are concealed for forty nights and days, but when the year has revolved they appear once more, when the iron is being sharpened." Even if all the listeners had been farmers, and rather gullible ones at that, it is still hard to imagine that anyone could have been at the edge of his seat for this astronomical-agricultural lecture. Inevitably the people demand that Homer be given the crown. "But," we are told, "the king crowned Hesiod, declaring that the winner should be the man who recommended farming and peace, not the one whose subject was war and bloodshed."

The *Contest* is not, of course, a record of an actual competition. It should be read as an interesting piece of ancient literary criticism. It engages with an issue that we still debate today: the relationship between literature and moral values, between culture and politics. Should great works of literature be appreciated for their ethical teaching—so that, for example, we might read the *Iliad* as a text about the bad effects of anger, or about the importance of discipline in the army? Or should we draw a sharp distinction between literature that delights—as the Homeric poems undoubtedly do—and school textbooks that give us dull but useful information, or the *Pollyanna* school of literature that teaches us how to be good even if it bores us to tears?

And what should we do if the cultural products that we find most delightful are also those that corrupt us? Plato's Socrates expels Homer and the tragic poets from his ideal republic, because their work is damaging to the citizens' souls. According to Plato, the *Iliad* makes you feel things that you ought not to feel: rage, blood-lust, intense despair. Similar arguments have been often made in our own time about pornography and violent computer games. And the debate ranges to high culture as well as low: some have contended that we ought not to encourage vulnerable teenagers to read Sylvia Plath. Political and ethical considerations continually drive school curricula. It is not for aesthetic reasons that so many high school students are marched through Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

Homer and Hesiod, the oldest surviving poets in the Greek literary tradition, stood at the heart of ancient Greek cultural heritage. Most Greeks would surely have hesitated to say, with Plato, that Homer was an immoral influence on the minds of the citizens. But anxiety about Homer's ethics—the violence, the passion, and especially the bad behavior of the gods—runs deep in the Greek tradition, going back at least to the time of Xenophanes in the sixth century B.C.E., and on into the attempts of later Greek critics to bowdlerize or allegorize Homer.

In the *Contest*, the Euboean king's decision is very carefully worded. He does not say that Homer recommends or glorifies war, only that he goes through it in detail (he uses the verb *diexeimi*, "to run through"). The author of the *Contest* includes one of the many moments in the *Iliad* in which the narrator calls our attention to the pain and the pathos of the battlefield, even in its moments of glory: "A person would have to be stony-hearted to rejoice when he saw their suffering, and not to feel grief." Homer hardly presents war as an unmitigated blessing, and he constantly reminds his listeners that they should remember to weep. But the king suggests that just describing war—even if you show that it is horrible, painful, cruel, and wasteful, as well as thrilling—will act as a recommendation for violence. A similar argument was made fairly recently by the Gulf War veteran Anthony Swofford


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in his book *Jarhead* (and in the movie made from it). As Swofford notes, even books and films that are explicitly anti-war may serve as incitements to violence for certain viewers or readers.

The king is careful in his characterization of Hesiod's poetry, too. We are not told that he actually gives good information about farming. Instead, the king recommends Hesiod for his moral values and his vision of the world: he praises farming and peace, not war and bloodshed. In the stimulating introduction to his new Loeb Classics two-volume edition of Hesiod, Glenn Most makes the case that we, too, should admire Hesiod for his powerful and unified worldview. Most assures us that we can find in the *Theogony* an original and idiomatic "comprehensive account of the origin and organization of the divinities responsible for the religious, moral, and physical structure of the world." *Works and Days*, too, has a "profound conceptual unity": it is a proto-philosophical meditation on the relationship between the gods and humanity, and between divine justice and the human obligation to work.

Most is surely right that much of the interest of the Hesiodic corpus lies in its style of thought. Various attempts have been made to read the Homeric poems for their proto-philosophical vision of human life and death, notably Simone Weil's famous essay on the *Iliad* as a "poem of force." But in Homer, the emotions and the experiences of the characters are far more important than any abstract ideas. In Hesiod, it is the other way around. The vast questions that are addressed in these poems—the origins of the gods, the way the world works, the reasons why things are as they are—can be seen as the first rumblings of natural science, physics, philosophy, theology, medicine, autobiography, agriculture, law, even history and textual criticism. Hesiod's poems are intensely concerned with classification (that primary scientific or academic endeavor), and also with analysis. Where Homer simply describes and evokes a world, showing us a status quo, Hesiod asks why things are as they are, and where they came from.

It is surprisingly difficult to say where the Hesiodic poems themselves came from. Hesiod was not a lonely genius who invented the Olympian gods all by himself in a moment of inspiration. Some may doubt whether the corpus is quite as unified as Most suggests. In *Works and Days*, advice about agriculture jostles with animal fables. We get moralizing tidbits that promote a strong work ethic ("work is not a disgrace, but not working is a disgrace"; "the work-postponing man is always wrestling with calamities"), followed by a long list of various lucky and unlucky days of the month and their suitability for different activities—advice that is mostly singularly useless. ("Nor is the sixth day fitting for a maiden to be born, but it is a kind day for castrating kids and rams.") And Hesiod has a disarming tendency to undermine his own recommendations. After listing the omens for various days at greater length than one might wish, he ends by suggesting that perhaps nobody knows which days will really be lucky after all. "One man praises one kind of day, another another; but few are the ones who know. One time one of these days is a mother-in-law, another time a mother." It appears that mother-in-law jokes go back a long way.

The obvious question to ask about all this proverbial "wisdom" is how much it can be ascribed to a single person—to "Hesiod" himself. The Hesiodic poems invite us to think about their author in a way that the Homeric poems do not, because they include far more personal detail. Homer never names himself in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. The only moment of apparent autobiography in the Homeric corpus comes in the "Hymn to Delian Apollo," when the poet imagines what the god's handmaidens would say if a stranger came to ask who this singer is. He tells them to answer, "all of you, with a single voice: 'He is a blind man and dwells in rocky Chios; his songs are always the best forever.' " It is from those two lines that the myth of Homer as the blind bard developed.

With Hesiod, there is far more material for biographical speculation. We learn that Hesiod's father emigrated from Aeolia because of poverty, and that he sailed to Boetia by ship. Hesiod himself never set to sea, although he can teach you all there is to know about seafaring (a nasty business). Hesiod grew up in a horrid little Boetian village called Ascra ("evil in winter, distressful in winter, not ever fine"). He had a brother named Perses, the addressee of *Works and Days*, with whom he had some kind of falling out. We may or may not believe that any of this bears much relation to biographical reality.

Both the major poems of the Hesiodic corpus, *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*, begin with invocations to the Muses, which establish the personal authority of the teacher who will sing the rest of the song. In the *Theogony*, a dense list of the Muses' divine subject matter—Zeus, Aphrodite, Athena, and company—is followed by a striking and hugely influential account of the poet's own inspiration:

> One time they taught Hesiod beautiful song while he was pasturing lambs under holy Helicon. And this speech the goddesses spoke first of all to me: "Field-dwelling shepherds, ignoble disgraces, mere bellies: we know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones, but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things." So spoke great Zeus' ready-speaking daughters, and they plucked a staff, a branch of luxuriant laurel, a marvel, and gave it to me, so that I might glorify what will be and what was before, and they commanded me to sing of the race of the blessed ones who always are, but always to sing of themselves first and last.

Most's reading of this important passage is refreshingly simple. He thinks that it really happened. A shepherd called Hesiod, an inhabitant of the village of Ascra, really did have a divine hallucination on Mount Helican. Most offers an observant close reading of the passage, in which he points out, among other things, that it is a mistake to characterize this experience simply as a "vision": Hesiod *hears* divine voices before he *sees* the laurel staff, and he finally *feels* within himself a new power to produce poetry. Most notes that "literal-minded readers" may doubt some details of the experience, such as the idea that the laurel staff was put there by some miracle: perhaps "he simply stumbled upon a carved staff someone else had made earlier and discarded there, or even upon a branch of a peculiar natural shape." In antiquity, the literal-minded had rather more cynical explanations. It was often suggested that Hesiod had eaten the laurel, and that he saw the Muses because he was tripping on this psychotropic drug.

It is tempting to think that complex accounts are always smarter than simple ones. But Most is no fool. In his discussion of Hesiod's addressee, the poet's brother Perses, Most suggests that we can set aside the question of whether the brothers really had a fight over some kind of court case. The real arena for moral judgment, in *Works and Days*, is not a lawsuit in the real world, but the didactic process of the poem itself. Most is not unaware of the enormous strides that have been made in the study of Greek archaic poetry over the past hundred years or so, but he insists that it is futile to be too skeptical about Hesiod's autobiographical statements. We ought not ask whether the story is true, he suggests, but "instead ask why he might have thought it


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a good idea to include it." His answer is a strong one: Hesiod's insistence on himself "as an *author* serves to *authorize* him." By telling the story of his initiation by the Muses, the poet shows that he gets his information about the gods straight from the divine horses' mouths. Most adds the important caveat that the fact that Hesiod has a motive for telling the story does not in the least preclude the possibility that the divine initiation really happened.

Most's style of argument is vigorous, and his notion of Hesiod as a real person, whose life and experiences are still accessible to us through his poetry, is appealing. But I did not find myself convinced. Most's formulation of the issue—"why he might have thought it a good idea to include it"—begs one of the most crucial questions about all archaic Greek hexameter poetry: who is "he"? To what extent should we think of "Hesiod" as a single person? Most assumes that the person who decided what to include in *Works and Days* was always a man called Hesiod, who should be considered the "author" of the poem, in something like the sense that Charlotte Brontë should be considered the author of *Jane Eyre*.

But there are some compelling reasons for doubt. The Homeric and Hesiodic poems are certainly based on a very long oral tradition. They were probably first written down in something like their current form fairly soon after the new technology of writing came to Greece—in the late eighth or early seventh century B.C.E. There is no strong reason to think that Hesiod is significantly later than Homer. Perhaps a skilled bard, or a group of bards, collaborated with a scribe, or several scribes, to put together the best possible versions of the story of Achilles and the stories about the gods. Or perhaps a few oral poets finally learned to write. Or perhaps, as some scholars still believe, there were two geniuses at the end of the eighth century, Hesiod and Homer, the best poets archaic Greece had ever known, who somehow transferred their own best work to paper. But even in that case, what was written down included the words, phrases, and stories developed by many generations of illiterate bards.

In the early twentieth century, our understanding of archaic Greek poetry was enormously enriched by Milman Parry's comparative work on contemporary oral poets in what was then Yugoslavia. Parry showed that a purely oral and illiterate poet, without any use of writing, could produce a long and complicated poem, based on traditional material and using traditional formulae. The relationship between the *Theogony* as we have it and the oral tradition—which is inevitably lost—is almost impossible to reconstruct. But such scholars as Martin West and Gregory Nagy (the latter oddly not mentioned in Most's bibliography) have shown that much of Hesiod's material is indeed traditional, and can be paralleled by much earlier Near Eastern legends and proverbs (including the tradition that produced the biblical book of Proverbs). The material may well have taken on a new and individual stamp in its Hellenic form.

No single person made up all the Hesiodic stories and proverbs, and they may not even have been put together at a single time. The use of Hesiod's first-person story at the start of the *Theogony* may be read less as giving authority to the author than as a sign of the authenticity of the poem itself. There were probably many different versions of the Hesiodic corpus in antiquity, including works that are now lost to us. Similarly, the work of the sixth-century lyric poet Theognis—a miscellaneous collection that probably includes sections of poetry from many different composers and time periods—includes at the beginning a "seal" or guarantee that the whole thing really is by Theognis: "This is the work of Theognis, / The man from Megara, famous throughout all people." The "seal," too, is controversial. But arguably, the declaration of the author's name, in the case of both Hesiod and Theognis, is not the mark of an author who wishes to claim his own work, but of a later editor who wants to assert that his collection is more genuine than any other.

A compelling case can be made that the whole account of Hesiod's initiation by the Muses on Mount Helicon was added to the poem in Hellenistic times, so as to coincide with the new institutionalization of a cult of the Muses in Boetia (as argued by Robert Lamberton in *Hesiod*, his fine introduction to Hesiod's poetry). We can thus give a plausible motive for the presence of Hesiod's encounter with the Muses in the poem that has nothing to do with the facts of his life, whatever they may have been. In fact, one might argue that identifying that shepherd "Hesiod" as the author of the poem is almost as much of a category mistake as identifying the editor of *Pale Fire*, Charles Kinbote, with Nabokov. Internal narrators are not the same as authors.

All this may seem like a rather arcane scholarly debate. But the debate matters, even for non-classicists, because it touches on our assumptions about how great literature gets made. Critics and scholars such as Most assume that an admirable and unified piece of poetry cannot be produced by a nameless tradition, or by a committee: it must be the work of an individual genius. Yet the evidence suggests that archaic Greek poetry, which emerges from a collective oral tradition, does not follow this rule. It is possible to admire and to enjoy the Hesiodic poems enormously without believing that they are necessarily the work of one man, or that anything special ever happened on Mount Helicon.

Hesiod is our oldest source for many of the best-known and best-loved stories of Greek mythology. The *Iliad*, by comparison, is extraordinarily narrow in its subject matter. It excludes a great many even of the legends associated with Troy (such as the Trojan horse) in order to concentrate on a single episode in the life of Achilles. By contrast, the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* include enormous numbers of divine characters, and diverse myths. In Hesiod we first encounter the story of the Ages of Man, from the idyllic Golden Age through the Age of Heroes to the fallen Age of Iron in which we live. From him we get two of the most influential Western stories about the origin of evil and suffering: the tale of how a woman was the cause of all man's pain, when Pandora opened the secret box and unleashed sorrow in the world; and the intertwined story of Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus, and whose punishment was to have his liver pecked out by eagles every day. Hesiod tells us about the time before gods, when Sky and Earth gave birth to Titans. He sings of how Cronos devoured his own children, and was stopped only when Zeus, the last child, castrated his own father. He tells of the birth of Athena from her father's head. Hesiod preserves or constructs some of the most important Greek myths about the interactions between gods and man.

With all this wonderful material, Hesiod ought to be a joy to read. But this is not always the case. I remember my own disappointment when I first tried to read him as a teenager. I loved the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but could find nothing in Hesiod to rival the sublimity of the Homeric poems. *Works and Days* struck me as a mishmash of folklore, with little coherence or artistic merit. The *Theogony* was even more disappointing. Here were the great tales of the clash of the Titans with the Olympian gods, the formation of Chaos, Earth, and Sky—but all lacking the sense of the numinous that I had glimpsed in Milton



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and Blake or, for that matter, in Tolkien's *Silmarillion* and Roger Lancelot Green's *Old Greek Fairy Tales*, the beloved books of my childhood. Hesiod was the first to tell these great stories, but he told them in a way that strikes many first-time readers as clumsy or naïve.

One obvious problem with the Hesiodic poems, from the perspective of many modern readers, is that these works have no central character and no unified plot. What we learn about Hesiod's own supposed biography is fragmentary and inconsistent, and the advice that he offers is also inconsistent. The novel-reader's interest in characterization may be satisfied by Homer, but it is entirely frustrated by Hesiod. If there is a hero in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, it is poetry itself: the preserved heritage of Greek and Indo-European wisdom, which ranges through the whole of Mediterranean life, from goddesses to goats. The hero is the wisdom of the tribe.

It can be vexing for a modern reader to be told that your instructor has no personal experience of the subject matter that he is teaching—as when Hesiod declares that "I shall show you the measures of the much-roaring sea, I who have no expertise at all in either seafaring or boats." But this brazen admission is a reminder that Hesiod, unlike Homer, will tell, not show; and that we are being invited to value the wisdom of tradition over anything that we may experience for ourselves. The sense that Hesiod offers something like a poetic or religious initiation into inherited lore—the world of the Muses—is increased by his language, which includes a number of wonderful riddling expressions. "The boneless one" refers to the octopus. We are advised that when attending a religious ceremony, one should not "cut the dry from the living from the five-brancher with the gleaming iron" (and you have to guess what that means).

Part of the charm of reading Hesiod is that he evokes the ordinary details of life in archaic Greece, even down to urination and defecation—subjects that Homer is almost always too dignified to discuss. "Do not urinate while you are walking, on the road or off the road: it is crouching that the godfearing man, who knows wisdom, does it, or after he has approached towards the wall of a well-fenced courtyard. And inside the house do not reveal your genitals besmirched with intercourse near the hearth, but avoid this." *Works and Days* even tells you what to eat for breakfast before ploughing: "a four-piece, eight-part loaf" will apparently be enough to sustain a strong forty-year-old man though a hard day behind the oxen. From the same poem you can learn what to wear for the various seasons: when winter comes, "Bind around your feet well-fitting boots from the slaughtered ox, padded inside with felt.... Wear a well-made felt cap upon your head, so that you do not get your ears wet." We are not told how to make the cap, presumably because cap-making is women's work.

Hesiod's "wisdom" is not, of course, limited to the minutiae of plowing, urinating, and getting dressed. Most is quite right to suggest that these poems promote a whole worldview, in which the gods, justice, and human work are all intertwined. But that worldview is not purely or obviously "moral," if morality implies something more than self-justification. The king of the *Contest* is actually quite misleading when he presents Hesiod only as a poet of peace. The scenes of rape, the battles between gods and Titans, the castration of sons by fathers, and the devouring of children in the *Theogony* are in many ways more shocking than anything in Homer. Hesiod's teaching includes a strong lesson that the world can be a brutal and terrifying place.

Most does not comment at all on the striking misogyny of the *Theogony*—in which, for example, we are told that Pandora was a "beautiful evil" who brought to humanity "the deadly race and tribe of women, a great woe for mortals, dwelling with men, no companions of baneful poverty but only of luxury." The Hesiodic poems teach their male listeners and readers to think of themselves as entirely different beings from their wives and daughters. Many of the great myths, too, can be read as justifications for patriarchy or expressions of a wish to get rid of women altogether. Aphrodite, that male ideal, is born without female aid, from the semen of the sea. The disturbing moral complexity of the Hesiodic poems is all the more reason why we should continue to read and study them.

If you have never read any Hesiod, Most's version is not the best place to start. Martin West, the most eminent Hesiod scholar in the English-speaking world, has a fine prose translation of the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* in the Oxford World's Classics series, which appeared in 1999. If you want to try to get more sense of the poetry as poetry, but do not have time to learn Greek, then your best bet is probably Richard Lattimore's old and still impressive verse translation of the *Theogony, Works and Days,* and the *Shield*, which includes a useful summary of *Works and Days* facing the main text, as well as genealogical tables of gods. Lattimore's Hesiod is the closest thing to a D'Aulaire's *Greek Myths* for grown-ups. Other good verse translations include the fine poetic rendering by Apostoulos Athanakassis (1993) and two recent attempts to echo Hesiod's long hexameter line in English, one by Daryl Hine and another by Catherine M. Schlegel and Henry Weinfield. If you want to dip into Hesiod for the first time, you should begin with one of these.

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But no other modern English translation includes the fragmentary works or the ancient testimonia. If you already have some familiarity with Hesiod's two best-known works and you want to know more about the rest of the Hesiodic corpus and about the ancient reception of this canonical figure, then Most's new Loeb books will be essential. Most makes various important corrections and improvements in his translation. He rightly remarks, for example, that "chaos" is a misleading way to translate Hesiod's *chaos*, which in fact means something more like "chasm" (Most's rendering): it does not connote randomness or disorder. But generally Most's translation feels comfortingly familiar. He does not move very far away from the traditions of the old Loeb series, which favored conservative scholarship and Edwardian archaisms.

Yet to my ear, the previous Hesiod Loeb—*Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*, edited by Hugh Evelyn-White—is sometimes preferable. Take the moment when Cronos castrates his father Ouranos, or Sky. In Evelyn-White, we are told, "Then the son from his ambush stretched forth his left hand and in his right took the great long sickle with jagged teeth and swiftly lopped off his own father's members and cast them away to fall behind him." The prose constantly slips into anapests or dactyls (da-da-DUM, da-da-DUM), and zips along at a pace reminiscent of Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, if not quite Hesiod's hexameter. In Most, however, the rhythms are much flatter: "He grasped the monstrous sickle, long and jagged-toothed, and eagerly he reaped the genitals from his dear father, and threw them behind



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him to be borne away." Most's use of the word "dear" to describe the castrated father makes the lines sound more paradoxical than they necessarily are. *Philos* in Greek may suggest a loved person, but it may simply suggest kinship; the epithet expresses shock that Cronos castrated his father even though he was his own kin (love does not come into it). This is captured more accurately by Evelyn-White, who emphasizes that Cronos is cutting off the "members" from his "own father."

In the old Loeb, Hesiod was combined with the *Hymns* and various interesting later works from the tradition, such as the mock-heroic *Battle of the Mice and Frogs* and the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*. It was nice to have all these things available in one volume. And the combination made one aware of an important truth: that the Homeric and Hesiodic traditions were not really as separate as we like to think. Works such as the *Contest* invite us to consider Homer and Hesiod as the representatives, the origins, of two entirely different kinds of literature—literature that delights and literature that instructs, respectively. But it is striking how often Homer and Hesiod are actually linked in Greek literary reception. Their names are less often contrasted than paired.

We can see very clearly, if we read all the extant Hesiodic and Homeric poems, that there are many moments where "Hesiod" is hard to distinguish from "Homer." The *Homeric Hymns* often adopt the gods'-eye perspective that seems so characteristic of the *Theogony*. The *Theogony* includes amazing descriptions of physical violence on the divine battlefield that parallel the battles of the *Iliad*. The fascinating Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (which survives only in fragmentary form, included in Most's second volume) seems to have paralleled the list of famous heroic dead women in Book Eleven of the *Odyssey*. The *Shield of Heracles* is clearly within the same tradition as the great account of Achilles's shield in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*. Homer and Hesiod were both the teachers of the Greeks—until the prose writers of an increasingly literate age began to treat poetry as mere entertainment or worse. Plato's Socrates pairs the names of Homer and Hesiod. Both these archaic teachers turn out to be false moral guides, compared to the truth of philosophy.

Plato was—as Andrea Nightingale has persuasively argued—the inventor of philosophy as a discipline, distinct from literature, theology, mythology and natural science. The idea that there is always a sharp distinction between philosophy and literature has been one of the most influential and—in my opinion—damaging of Plato's many dangerous ideas. Reading Hesiod, even more than reading Homer, reminds us of a time before modern notions of truth, falsehood, and fiction existed, and before it was possible to distinguish between pleasure and education. It would be impossible, in our information age, to recover the experience of listening to oral poetry in archaic, pre-literate Greece. We endorse ever more rigid distinctions between works of supposedly high culture (such as the *Theogony* itself), which are read only "for class" or to pass an exam, and the culture that we seek out for pleasure: television, blogs, movies, the Internet, magazines, popular music. But we may look back to Hesiod's poetry as representative of a cultural Golden Age when it was possible for a single work of literature to encompass the whole of traditional "wisdom": high and low, ancient and modern, philosophical and poetic, practical and metaphysical. Perhaps even our Age of Iron could learn from him. ◆

## Jeffrey Herf
# THE WHOLE HORROR

**THE YEARS OF EXTERMINATION: NAZI GERMANY AND THE JEWS, 1939–1945**
By Saul Friedländer
(HarperCollins, 870 pp., $39.95)

With the publication of *The Years of Extermination*, Saul Friedländer adds to his already well-established reputation as one of the world's pre-eminent historians of the Holocaust and of its place in modern European, German, and Jewish history. In this synthetic work that draws on scholarship of recent decades, Friedländer integrates a history of German official decision-making—from Hitler down through his various chains of command—with the observations, chronicles, and analyses of Jewish diarists. It is all here.

Friedländer's evidence comes from official documents, but also from numerous eyewitnesses whose personal chronicles are, in his words, "like lightning flashes that illuminate parts of the landscape." He enriches the well-known chronology of German policies and operations with a succession of scenes and anecdotes about particular individuals in specific times and places. Conversely, by situating diaries and memoirs in the context of a carefully constructed political history, he deepens their credibility and their historical value. In these pages, office memos and personal memories reinforce one another. *The Years of Extermination* is one of the most important works of historical writing in recent years, and deserves to live in the company of works by Raul Hilberg, Lucy Dawidowicz, and Leni Yahil as one of the finest comprehensive studies of this darkest subject of all.

*The Years of Extermination* rests on a career of scholarship nearly half a century long. In Paris in 1964, Friedländer published an edited collection of documents about the response—or more precisely, the lack thereof—by Pope Pius XII to the Holocaust. An English edition followed two years later. Then, in 1967, *Prelude to Downfall: Hitler and the United States, 1939–1941* underscored the importance of Roosevelt's resistance to Hitler in the two years preceding Pearl Harbor and American entry into the war in Europe. In 1969, Friedländer published *Kurt Gerstein: The Ambiguity of Good*, about a Waffen SS officer who witnessed murders of Jews in the gas chambers in Belzec in 1942 and passed the information on to Swedish diplomats, though they did not inform the Allies. In 1979, Friedländer published *When Memory Comes*, an extraordinary memoir of his own survival during the Holocaust as a boy hidden in a Roman Catholic seminary in France, followed by his eventual awareness of his Jewish origins and his coming of age in Israel. In 1988, he helped to found the influential journal *History and Memory*. A conference that he organized at UCLA about the postmodernist challenge to the determination of historical fact led in 1992 to *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution."* And his reflections on history, memory, and writing about the Holocaust led in 1993 to *Memory, History, and the Exter-*

*Jeffrey Herf teaches modern European and German history at the University of Maryland. He is the author, most recently, of* The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust *(Harvard University Press).*



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*mination of the Jews of Europe.*

Then there appeared the first installment of Friedländer's grand culminating project. *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume I: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* quickly became one of the standard works on the subject. Friedländer's years of conceptual reflection about history, politics, narrative, and memory found expression in a remarkable mixture of analysis and story that was admired by scholars and general readers alike. In that book, he displayed a keen eye for the illustrative detail—for example, in his discussion of the legalisms of Nazi racial legislation. He depicted the mixture of ideological enthusiasm and crass opportunism of the response of German elites of the 1930s to Nazi anti-Jewish policy, and offered a compelling description of what he called "redemptive anti-Semitism" in Hitler's Germany of the 1930s.

The first volume of *Nazi Germany and the Jews* included another dimension that comes even more to the fore in its successor volume, *The Years of Extermination*. In both books, Friedländer adopted a binocular view of the catastrophe: he examined both the Germans and the Jews. It is customary to write the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust primarily as one about German subjectivity, that is, as a history of what Hitler and his associates said and did. The very nature of a history of persecution and extermination is such that the subjectivity of the Jews—the victims with vastly less control over the course of events—has faded somewhat into the background. The enormous mass of documents of the Nazi regime captured by the Allies in 1945 and now dispersed in many archives has meant that the voices of the perpetrators have figured most prominently in historical writing.

In one sense, of course, this compartmentalization has been essential in order to distinguish truths from lies, and to establish as fact what the Nazis sought to conceal and to deny. Friedländer's accomplishment lies in bringing the voices of Jewish diarists and chroniclers into the main narrative of these events. And he has incorporated this history from below without an ounce of the romanticism and the sentimentality that sometimes accompany work using eyewitness testimony. Friedländer's goal in his new book is to write "[an] integrative and an integrated history" of the Holocaust, one that combines what has remained separate in many previous accounts.

For obvious reasons, Friedländer places weight on the German dimension, as it was "the Germans, their collaborators and their auxiliaries [who] were the instigators and prime agents of the policies of persecution and extermination and, mostly, of their implementation." But that is the beginning of the story, not the end. For "the Holocaust requires … a much wider range," one that encompasses the non-Germans who actively participated or contributed along a continuum of indifference to silent approval. "At each step, in occupied Europe, the execution of German measures depended on the submissiveness of political authorities, the assistance of local police forces or other auxiliaries, and the passivity or support of the populations and mainly of the political and spiritual elites. It also depended on the willingness of the victims to follow orders in the hope of alleviating German strictures or gaining time and somehow escaping the inexorable tightening of the German vise."

An integrated history requires balance. It is an exquisitely difficult task. Slighting the German dimension to focus on collaborators may obscure the central driving force. Focusing exclusively on Hitler and Himmler and the Nazi institutions that implemented the Final Solution can diminish the significance of collaborators and fellow perpetrators among non-Germans in Nazi-occupied Europe. Placing too much weight on the experiences of the victims can risk losing sight of the political history taking place at the top of the Nazi regime. An integrated history must find a course between the history of political decision-making in which the experience of victims falls from view and one that focuses on the wrenching experience of the Jews. Friedländer has struck the balance beautifully.

Friedländer's account falls firmly within what has come to be known as an "intentionalist" approach to the history of Nazism and the Holocaust. Like George Mosse, Karl Bracher, Lucy Dawidowicz, and Eberhard Jaeckel, Friedländer argues that Nazi ideology and Hitler's resulting obsessions played a fundamental causal role in the Holocaust. He dissents from the view, first articulated by Franz Neumann in the 1940s and more recently by Götz Aly, that "the persecution and extermination of the Jews of Europe was but a secondary consequence of major German policies pursued toward entirely different goals," usually of an economic or demographic nature. Hence *The Years of Extermination* examines the nature of wartime anti-Semitism not only in Nazi Germany but also in the surrounding European world that collaborated in attack on the Jews or responded to it with silence and indifference.

In *The Years of Persecution*, Friedländer described what he called "redemptive anti-Semitism," that is, the idea that Germany and Europe would be redeemed and better off if they were cleansed and freed of the Jews. In this subsequent volume, he explores the more radical and deadly form of anti-Semitism characterized by the belief that "*the Jew was a lethal and active threat to all nations, to the Aryan race and to the German Volk*. The emphasis is not only on 'lethal' but also—and mainly—on 'active.'" The Nazis viewed their other victims—such as the peoples of Eastern Europe, Gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally ill, and the physically handicapped—as inferior in various ways, and passive. The Jews, by contrast, were for Hitler and the Nazi leadership around him "the only group that, since its appearance in history, relentlessly plotted and maneuvered to subdue all of humanity."

This is a crucial point. Nazi wartime propaganda depicted the Jews as a real and active political subject who were plotting to wage a war of extermination against the German people. This racially grounded political accusation stood at the center of Hitler's oft-repeated public justifications for genocide, which were endlessly reiterated and amplified by the regime's propagandists. In *The Years of Extermination* readers will—surprisingly, for the first time—have a full presentation of the arguments and the evidence that demonstrate what changed in the nature of anti-Semitism as it evolved from the era of persecution before 1939 to the years of extermination. These books, along with the work of Omer Bartov, Richard Breitman, Christopher Browning, Phillip Burrin, Jürgen Förster, Manfred Messerschmidt, and Gerhard Weinberg, offer us something we did not have a decade ago: namely, a body of historical scholarship that examines World War II and the Holocaust as two events linked by intrinsic causal connections as well as by contingent factors of space and time. At bottom, it was Hitler's and Nazism's ideology that formed the key connection.

In an infamous "prophecy" delivered in a speech to the Reichstag on January 1, 1939, Hitler threatened that if "international Jewry" started "another" world war, such a war would end not in the extermination of the Aryan race but rather in the extermination of the "Jewish race" in Europe. He repeated this warning in public and private on at least seven occasions in the last two months of 1941. I agree with Friedländer's assertion that "nothing of that kind had ever happened before in Hitler's declarations," as his deadly taunts became "one continuous rant." Friedlän-



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der draws on the work of historians of Nazi policy to argue plausibly that Hitler made the decision to exterminate the Jews of Europe during last three months of 1941, as the war against Europe's Jews and against the Allies merged into one. As Friedländer puts it, "for Nazism, the Jews, the Jewish peril, and the uncompromising struggle against 'the Jew' were, as we have seen, *the mobilizing myth of the regime*."

As the reader would expect, Friedländer recounts the contributions to the Holocaust by now-familiar villains such as Hans Frank (the Nazi boss in Poland's General Government), Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, Joseph Goebbels, Albert Speer, and Joachim von Ribbentrop. His interpretation of Goebbels and the propaganda effort is very well done. And he follows the message down the chain of command. One of the important accomplishments of historical scholarship of the past quarter-century has been to document in greater depth what the postwar trials in Nuremberg had established—namely, the deep involvement of the German military leadership in the racist and anti-Semitic hatreds that originated with Hitler and Goebbels. Friedländer cites the enthusiasm with which German military leaders such as Erich von Manstein and Walter von Reichenau passed on denunciations to the troops under their command of what Reichenau called "Jewish subhumanity." He draws on letters sent by German soldiers for evidence of diffusion of the regime's anti-Semitic message. Soon after one of Goebbels's rants, an army sergeant wrote in a letter home that "now Jewry has declared war on us along the whole line, from one extreme to another, from the London and New York plutocrats to the Bolsheviks. All that is under Jewish domination stands in one common front against us." The propaganda minister would have been pleased to know that almost his exact words made their way into this private communication.

The detailed reconstruction of the organizations and the persons involved in the Final Solution has been a focus of scholarship for many years, and it finds a place also in *The Years of Extermination.* Friedländer rightly points out that bureaucratic disputes did not at all impede cooperation regarding the Final Solution. The bureaucracy is everywhere in the genocide—for example, in the following anecdote about the inner workings of the Holocaust. In the summer of 1942, Heinrich Himmler's adjutant, SS Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff, demanded the personal intervention of the secretary of state at the Transportation Ministry, Dr. Theodor Ganzenmüller, to ensure daily deportations from Warsaw to the death camp at Treblinka. On July 27, Ganzenmüller reported that "since [July 22] a train with 5,000 Jews travels daily from Warsaw over Malkinia to Treblinka. Moreover, twice a week a train with 5,000 Jews travels from Przemysl to Belzec." Wolff replied on August 13, "Hearty thanks in the name of the Reichsführer SS [Himmler] for your letter.... With great joy I learned from your announcement that, for the past fourteen days, a train has gone daily to Treblinka with 5,000 members of the chosen people."

Another example of Friedländer's historiographical skill concerns the details of murder in a small Ukrainian town. "In early August 1941, the small town of Bjelaja Zerkow, south of Kiev, was occupied by the 295th Infantry Division of Army Group South; the Wehrmacht area commander, Colonel Riedl, ordered the registration of all Jewish inhabitants and asked SS *Sonderkommando 4a*, a subunit of *Einsatzgruppe C*—which in the meantime had moved from eastern Galicia to pre-1939 Soviet Union—to murder them." Friedländer describes the awful details of the murder of "all 800 to 900 local Jews" and then the somewhat delayed execution of ninety children under the age of five. The decision about whether or not to murder them went all the way up the chain of command to Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau and SS officer Paul Blobel. The officer who carried out the executions, a certain Captain Luley, was recommended for promotion.

In the first volume of his great work, Friedländer presented numerous examples of German government officials, lawyers, doctors, corporate executives, and church leaders who collaborated with the Nazi regime out of conviction and opportunism. *The Years of Extermination* addresses "an essential fact" about the period of 1939 to 1945: "Not one social group, not one religious community, not one scholarly institution or professional association in Germany and throughout Europe declared its solidarity with the Jews ... to the contrary, many social constituencies, many power groups were directly involved in the expropriation of the Jews and eager, be it out of greed, for their wholesale disappearance. Thus Nazi and related anti-Jewish policies could unfold to their most extreme levels without the interference of any major countervailing interests."

Friedländer also offers much material about the views and actions of Nazi collaborators in Eastern Europe, including the Croatian Ustasha, the Romanian Iron Guard, and the Ukranian and Latvian nationalists. *The Years of Extermination* draws emphatic attention to their participation in the Holocaust. The Romanian Jewish writer Mihael Sebastian observed a three-day anti-Semitic rampage in Bucharest by the SS-supported Iron Guard in Romania. On January 21, 1941, he wrote:

> The stunning thing about the Bucharest bloodbath is the quite bestial ferocity to it.... It is now considered absolutely certain that the Jews butchered at Straulesti abattoir were hanged by the neck on hooks normally used for beef carcasses. A sheet of paper was stuck to each corpse: "Kosher Meat." As for those killed in Jilava Forest, they were first undressed (it would have been a pity for clothes to remain there), then shot and thrown on top of one another.

As one would expect given Friedländer's longstanding engagement with the issue, *The Years of Extermination* deals extensively with the role of Europe's churches, Catholic and Protestant. During the 1930s and 1940s, 95 percent of European Christians were regular churchgoers and paid attention to what priests and ministers had to say about the events of the day. His assessment of the Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany during the Holocaust follows his critical view in *The Years of Persecution*. Regarding the period from 1939 to 1945, he concludes that "the conciliatory attitude" of the Christian churches and especially the Catholic church was a key factor in fostering that stance in Portugal, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Croatia, as well as in Vichy France. The new order in Europe established by the Nazi victories of 1940s "became an intensely anti-Jewish new order." He describes the stance of Pope Pius XII toward Hitler and his anti-Jewish policies as one of "selective appeasement." And some church officials went much further. On July 15, 1941, in the first month of the *Einsatzgruppen* murders of tens of thousands of Jews behind the lines on the Eastern Front, Polish Catholic officials sent the following message to the Polish government-in-exile in London:

> As far as the Jewish Question is concerned, it must be seen as a singular dispensation of Divine Providence that the Germans have already made a good start, quite irrespective of all the wrongs they have done and continue to do to



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> our country. They have shown that the liberation of Polish society from the Jewish plague is possible.... Clearly, one can see the hand of God in the contribution to the solution of this urgent question being made by the occupiers.

By December 1941, deportations of Jews from Germany to the East had sharpened controversies in both the Catholic and Protestant churches. On December 17, 1941, German Christian church leaders of Saxony, Nassau-Hesse, Mecklenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Anhalt, Thuringia, and Lubeck announced that the "severest measures" should be taken against the Jews, who should be expelled form German territories. The overwhelming majority of Catholic church leaders who had previously denounced the Nazi murders of the mentally ill and physically handicapped said nothing about the deportations of Jews from Germany. Friedländer concludes that between 1939 and 1945 the vast majority of church officials remained silent. They made clear and ugly distinctions between a tiny minority of Jews who converted to Christianity and the vast majority who did not. They accepted that there was a fundamental inequality between Christians and Jews, and failed to use the moral authority of the church to attempt to stop the genocide in progress. Anti-Semitic antipathies rooted in traditional Christian theology combined with fear of communism led the preponderance of leadership in the Christian churches of Europe to remain silent and on occasion to fan the flames of anti-Semitism. We read of the occasional priest or minister who gave a dissenting sermon (and was sometimes arrested or murdered as a result); but these were exceptions that proved the rule.

What was true of the churches was also true of the civil service, the intellectuals, the police, the journalists, the industrialists, and the professors. The anti-Semitism of prominent European intellectuals has been an important theme in the scholarship for some time. Readers will not be surprised to read that in 1940 the French novelist Céline asked, "Are we to remain slaves of the Jews, or shall we become Germanic once more?" Rather less well known is the effort of the association of French publishers in September 1940 to identify writers, artists, and intellectuals on lists of banned books: "These are the books which by their lying and tendentious spirit have systematically poisoned French public opinion; particularly the publications of political refugees or of Jewish writers who, having betrayed the hospitality that France had granted to them, unscrupulously agitated in favor of a war from which they hoped to take advantage for their own egoistic aims." Paris, writes Friedländer, "possibly more than any other Western European capital ... became a hotbed of intellectual and artistic collaboration." With very few exceptions, the European "academic community" also acquiesced in purging Jews from university faculties.

*The Years of Extermination* includes a great deal of material regarding the efforts of Europe's Jews to withstand, resist, and survive the German assault, which included bribing officials, fleeing, disappearing into small villages, converting, joining resistance movements, and recording in many diaries the unfolding campaign of mass murder. Almost nothing worked—a fact that has led observers then and since to assume that the Jews went passively like lambs to the slaughter. At times, faced with terror and dwindling hopes of survival, solidarity among Jews broke down. The leadership of French Jewry did its best to protect "native" French Jews or "Jewish Frenchmen," but gave less support to recent Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe.

Friedländer's discussion of the Jewish leadership in the ghettos of Eastern Europe comprises an important aspect of his work. He does not shy away from reporting the intense criticism to which some of these leaders were subjected by their fellow Jews. At the same time, he reconstructs the impossible situation in which these leaders found themselves. Some acted with more bravery and fairness than others. Friedländer concludes that, in the face of the German intent to exterminate, nothing they did mattered. No amount of political cunning, diplomacy, or work "had any impact whatsoever on the ultimate fate of their communities." *The Years of Extermination* puts to rest the ridiculous notion, advanced by Hannah Arendt and others, that passive resistance or civil disobedience would have been an effective tool in hindering the destruction.

The texts of Jewish diarists and chroniclers play a key role in Friedländer's reconstruction of events and mentalities in the Jewish communities. Chaim Kaplan, the director of a Hebrew school in Warsaw, noted Jewish reactions to the Soviet occupation of Poland in his diary on October 13, 1939. The Jews there looked

> upon the Bolsheviks as redeeming Messiahs. Even the wealthy, who would become poor under Bolshevism, preferred the Russians to the Germans. There is plunder on the one hand and plunder on the other, but the Russians plunder one as a citizen and a man, while the Nazis plunder one as a Jew. The former Polish government never spoiled us, but at the same time never overtly singled us out for torture. The Nazi is a sadist, however. His hatred of the Jews is a psychosis. He flogs and derives pleasure from it. The torment of the victim is a balm to his soul, especially if the victim is a Jew.

Following the German victories of early summer 1940, Kaplan wrote that "the Germans are, of course, the heroes of the war, but they require a short war; as they say in their language, a *Blitzkrieg*. They could not survive a long war. Time is their greatest enemy." Winston Churchill's famous speeches of June and July 1940 suggested the same strategic insight. On October 18, 1941, when it appeared that the Germans might defeat the Red Army outside Moscow, Kaplan wrote that "a Nazi victory means complete annihilation, morally and materially, for all the Jews of Europe."

In Amsterdam, Etty Hillesum, a young woman studying Slavic languages at Amsterdam University, recorded her rage about the deportations taking place in a diary entry on March 15, 1941. She was "beside myself with anger, cursing and swearing at the Germans.... The whole nation must be destroyed root and branch. And now and then I say nastily, 'They are all scum,' and at the same time I feel terribly ashamed and deeply unhappy but cannot stop even though I know that it's all wrong." Then, on June 14, 1941: "More arrests, more terror, concentration camps, the arbitrary dragging off of fathers, sisters, brothers. Everything seems so menacing and ominous, and always that feeling of total impotence." Jacques Biélinky, in France, was one of many Jewish chroniclers who observed the responses of their non-Jewish fellow citizens to anti-Jewish policies. On February 20, 1942, he recorded that non-Jewish colleagues made no attempt to prevent the dismissal of their only Jewish colleague. "They did not make the move; cowardice has become a civic virtue."

Victor Klemperer, now famous for his great diary of the Nazi era, recalled details of his arrest and interrogation at the Gestapo headquarters in Dresden on January 6, 1942. He reported that the "interrogating" officer conveyed the following version of the nature of World War II according to Hitler:


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"Who is going to win this war? You or us?"—"What do you mean?"—"Well, you pray for our defeat every day, don't you?—To Yahweh, or whatever it's called. It is the Jewish War, isn't it. Adolf Hitler said so—(shouting emphatically) and what Adolf Hitler says is true!"

On January 18, 1941, Hermann Kruk, who had been active in Yiddish cultural activities in Warsaw and then in Vilna, recoiled from efforts to stage cultural activities. "I felt offended, personally offended about the whole thing, let alone the festive evening. In every ghetto you can amuse yourself, cultivating art is certainly a good deed. But here, in the doleful situation of the Vilna Ghetto, in the shadow of Ponar, where of the 76,000 Vilna Jews, only 15,000 remain—here, at this moment, this is a disgrace.... You don't make theater in a graveyard." All these testimonies are essential for the historian, and crushing.

A great deal of work on the Holocaust examines what the Germans knew about the Holocaust. Friedländer thinks that many of them knew quite a bit. Yet *The Years of Extermination* is particularly interesting for its examination of what the Jews knew, of what mixture of hope, illusion, rumor, and fact prevailed in their communities. Deprived as they were of newspapers, radios, or any means of transportation, forced into ghettos, they made efforts to spread news. In early June 1942, an unknown survivor of the extermination in Włodawa in Poland sent an easily decipherable code letter to the Warsaw Ghetto making veiled reference to the preparation of the death camp in Treblinka. "Uncle has the intention to celebrate the wedding of his children also at your place; he has rented a house close to you, very close to you. You probably don't know a thing about it. We write to you, so that you may be informed and do find a house outside of the city, for yourself and also for all our brethren and children, as the uncle has already prepared a new house for all, the same as in our case." In his diary on July 8, 1942, Adam Czerniaków, the head of the Judenrat in Warsaw, reflected this understanding of impending disaster. He recalled a film about a captain who orders music to be played as a ship is sinking. "I have made up my mind," he wrote, "to emulate the captain."

Friedländer carefully reconstructs the erosion of illusions and the growing knowledge among the Jews about the fate that awaited them. He draws heavily on Czerniaków, as well as on the historian Emanuel Ringelblum's *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto*. Ringelblum described inhabitants freezing to death and dying of disease, and the "time of persecutions" giving way, at the end of 1942, to "the time of atrocities." The absence of Jewish illusions is evident as well in Ringelblum's account of a conversation with Mordechai Anielewicz, a leader of the armed resistance in Warsaw, in which the latter "gave an accurate appraisal of the uneven struggle, he foresaw the destruction of the ghetto and he was sure that neither he nor his combatants would survive the liquidation of the ghetto. He was sure that they would die like stray dogs and no one would even know their last resting place." A year later, in March 1944, Ringelblum and his son were captured and killed by the Germans in Warsaw.

When he examines the issue of what the early Zionist leadership in Palestine could have done to help the Jews of Europe, Friedländer writes that it did "not demonstrate any major commitment to alleviating the fate of the Jews in Europe, nor did it seem to devote much attention to the unfolding of the ever-more-manifest catastrophe." Though he cites the important recent work of the Israeli historian Tuvia Friling, Friedländer resists agreeing with the conclusion that Friling draws based on exhaustive research, namely that Ben-Gurion and Zionist leaders made great efforts with the absurdly limited military means at their disposal to help Europe's Jews. Friling's work points to both the desire to help and the absence of power to do so.

Like other historians before him, Friedländer criticizes the refusal of Britain and the United States to use their military power to attack the death camps, especially in the summer and fall of 1944, when approximately 500,000 Hungarian Jews were deported and murdered at Auschwitz. Yet while these criticisms of what the Western Allies failed to do in summer 1944 are justified, *The Years of Extermination*, like the historical scholarship in general, includes nothing about what the Soviet Union might have been able to do beginning in 1941, and even more so in 1943 and after, to use its military power to stop or to impede the Final Solution. So far as I know, no historian of the wartime Soviet Union or of the Holocaust has examined this issue. The opening of the Soviet archives offers some hope that this neglect will be overcome. Historians of the Holocaust have noted the enormous suffering endured by the Red Army and the citizens of the Soviet Union. Perhaps the deaths of eight million soldiers in the Red Army and approximately nineteen million Soviet citizens during World War II in Europe, as well as the major role played by the Red Army and Air Force in the defeat of the German armed forces and much of the Luftwaffe as well, have discouraged historians from probing into the subject. Whatever the reason, Friedländer does not address the issue in *The Years of Extermination*.

The fact is that the armed forces of the Soviet Union were located hundreds, not thousands, of miles from the death camps in Poland. The difficulties of aerial bombardment would have been daunting, but Soviet military historians estimate that the Soviet air force had gained air superiority over much of the Eastern Front by mid-1943, though not yet over German-occupied Poland. As early as 1940, the Soviet air force possessed thousands of medium-range bombers. In 1942, the Soviet Union produced more than 20,000 fighter planes, and in 1943 it produced more than 34,000. The Soviet Union's official history of its air force claims that between 1941 and 1945 it flew 3,124,000 sorties, dropped 30,450,000 bombs, destroyed 77,000 Axis aircraft (of which 57,000 were German), and flew 168,000 "strategic-bombing missions," including an attack on Berlin as early as June 1941. It carried out extensive photographic reconnaissance of the Eastern Front.

Granted, the Soviet Union was fighting desperately for its survival in 1941 and 1942; but the tide turned after the Battle of Stalingrad in January 1943, and the Eastern Front began to move west, closer to the death camps. What did the Soviet leaders know about the mass murders of the Jews, and when did they know it? Were there debates or discussions in wartime Moscow about possibly striking the death camps? These questions still await answers.

In time, a new synthesis will be written. The rush of serious scholarship on the Holocaust seems to be unstoppable. Yet I have no doubt that *The Years of Extermination* will stand the test of time for many years to come. On August 4, 1942 in Warsaw, Chaim Kaplan wrote the last entry in his diary before he was murdered: "If my life ends—what will become of my diary." In this magnificent work of historical erudition and moral clarity, Saul Friedländer has ensured that Kaplan's diary, and many other seemingly forgotten texts, will not perish; that they will live as sources of light about the darkness. He has fulfilled the doomed man's most desperate wish. ◆



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## Washington Diarist

# My Neocon Problem

A blog called *WurstWisdom*, railing against the neoconservative domination of the planet, recently contained the following passage: "There are other Neocons or Neocon facilitators you may not have heard of because they are seldom in the public eye, the better to wield behind-the-scenes power. These include Grover Norquist, Richard Viguerie, John Bolton, Elliot Abrams, Norman Ornstein …"

It was extremely disappointing to have my cover blown in this fashion. I had considered my weekly columns in *Roll Call* inveighing on behalf of campaign finance reform an excellent camouflage for my nefarious stealth machinations. But, alas, my identification with the neocon conspiracy has now become a commonplace "fact" in certain quarters—many of them, strangely, in Iowa. A blogger for *The Des Moines Register*, for instance, has declared me "a neoconservative Washington Insider." An Iowan novelist with a blog called *Is this Heaven?* recently referred to me as a "far-right … flak." This is quite a turnabout for my reputation. My career as a congressional analyst has steadfastly avoided partisan politics. In fact, I'm one of those Jurassic-era Washingtonians who believes in the virtues of centrism and bipartisanship. I have worked closely with both John McCain and Russ Feingold on campaign finance reform and with Barack Obama and Fred Thompson on congressional and civil service reform. As for my enemies, they span the spectrum: My writings have enraged Tom DeLay and Dennis Hastert, as well as the chairmen of the black and Hispanic congressional caucuses.

So why am I now somehow a dangerous neocon? Without a doubt, it is because of my perch as a scholar at the now infamous American Enterprise Institute (AEI). I joined AEI as an adjunct in 1978, while I was teaching political science at Washington's Catholic University, before converting to a full time think-tanker six years later. It is true that AEI is a bastion of conservative thought, having a long relationship with the self-proclaimed godfather of the neoconservative movement, Irving Kristol. And it is also true that some of my AEI colleagues were early and enthusiastic supporters of war with Iraq. They helped provide the intellectual framework for it and contributed to the crafting of the surge strategy. Of course, this recent history accounts for the think tank's popular image—not to mention the urge of various blogging naïfs and ignoramuses to cram me into the wrong ideological box.

I'm not, by nature, an outspoken company man. But the fusillades lobbed at AEI have got me thinking about my long-time intellectual home. And here's what I can tell you: I spent 13 years teaching full-time in university settings. Since then, I have regularly visited campuses. I can say flatly that the intellectual openness and lack of orthodoxy at AEI exceeds what I have seen on any college campus—and without faculty meetings. I have many pro-choice colleagues, along with a number of pro-life ones. There are many libertarians on issues like same-sex relationships. And, even though my writings have frequently ticked off conservative ideologues and business interests—especially my deep involvement in campaign finance reform—I have never once been told, "You can't say that" or "You better be careful." I have been able to pursue my interests in a completely unfettered way. I know that this is hard for people to understand, especially given the widespread desire to believe that a tight-knit cabal that convenes in a mysterious think tank is driving Bush administration policy. And I know that this flies in the face of a widespread desire to characterize all conservatives as intellectually intransigent. But life in Washington, thank goodness, is more complicated than that. I have many colleagues with strong opinions who are willing to listen to the opinions of those who disagree with them. And that fact gives me a sliver of hope. With many urgent issues, from global warming to subprime mortgage loans to health policy to pensions, there is plenty of sensible middle ground.

While I'm protesting unwarranted lumping into the neoconservative movement, I should mention another data point. I used to be a regular guest on my friend Al Franken's radio show on Air America, before he left the network. (Norman Podhoretz, with all due respect, can't claim this honor.) When Franken wrote a book imagining how he would run for president—his magnum opus, *Why Not Me?*—I played the role of his campaign manager. (Yes, my character handily defeated Karl Rove.) In the book, President Franken appoints the first all-Jewish cabinet. I'm very proud that he accepted my suggestion that he name Ralph Lauren (*né* Lipschitz) as secretary of the Interior. Why do I invoke Al Franken's kosher cabinet? To be blunt, I have a suspicion (based on occasional e-mail rants I get) that, for some lunatics, my knee-jerk inclusion in the neocon camp has to do with my double whammy: a home at AEI and a very Jewish name.

Ten years ago, my association with AEI was either ignored by people who were only dimly familiar with think tanks, or seen as a reasonable linkage: a centrist at a center-right organization. The last five years have been very different. For a large swath of the left, whether bloggers or journalists, AEI has become known as the enemy's cave—and anyone associated with it must be a part of the enemy team. This isn't just the fault of highly ideological bloggers. The tendency of the press, especially television, to divide discourse into someone over on the left screaming at someone on the right has sharpened the sense of us versus them—with nobody ever standing in between. So, too, has the take-no-prisoners rhetoric of right-wing talk radio hosts and left-wing columnists.

I deeply regret these developments. On a personal level, life in the center has become, as the Franken cabinet might put it, a pain in the tuchas. Innocuous statements I have made—or even things that would make conservatives angry—are routinely mischaracterized as right-wing rants. It is a sad but real testament to the nature of political discourse in America that what one says these days is less significant than from where one says it. ◆

Norman Ornstein

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*Norman Ornstein is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and co-author of* The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track.



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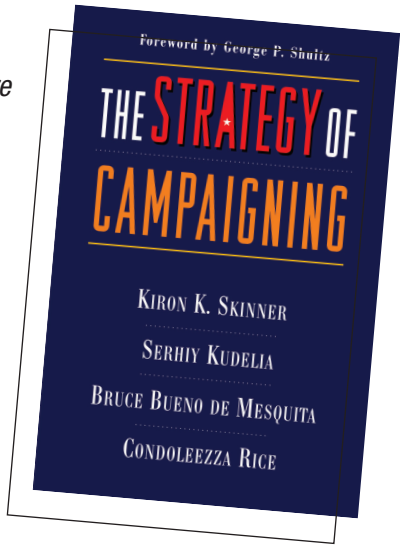


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